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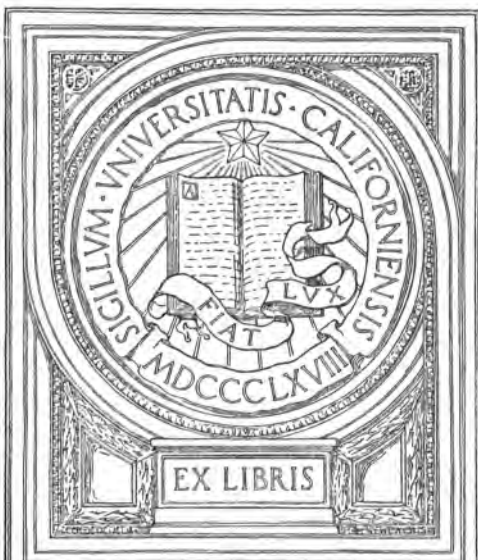
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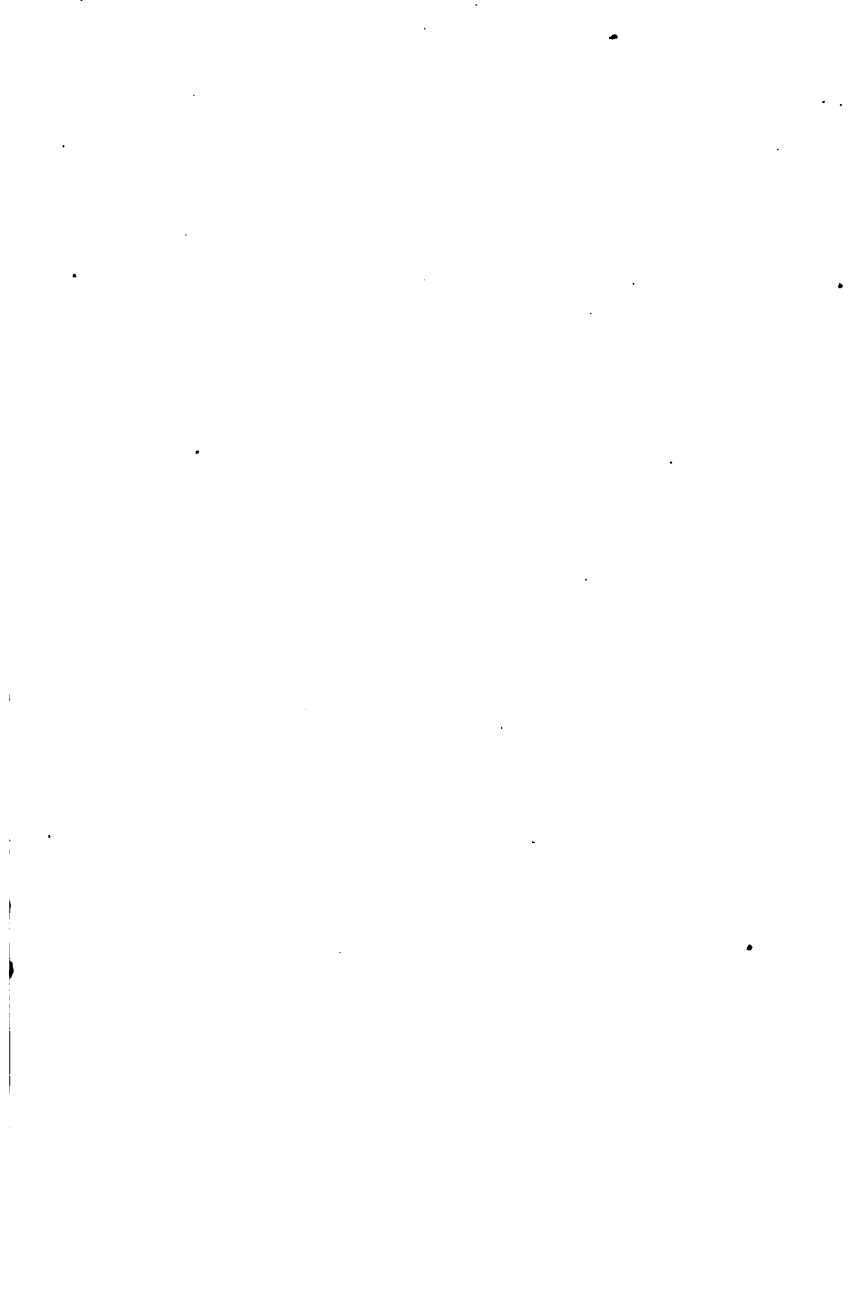




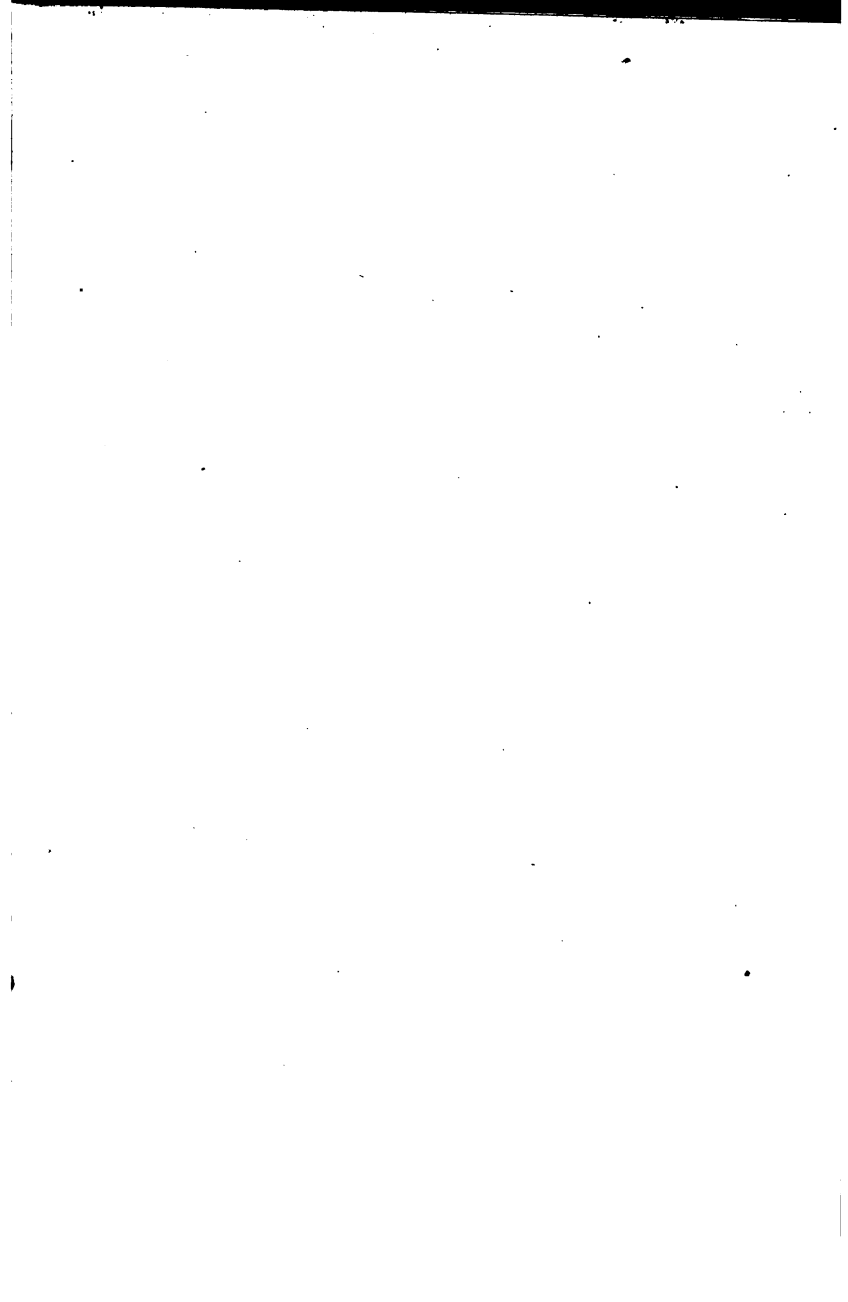
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THE TRUST
AND
THE REMITTANCE:

Two Love Stories in Metred Prose.

BY
MARY COWDEN CLARKE.

"It is silly sooth ;
And dallies with the innocence of Love ;
Like the old age."
SHAKESPEARE.



BOSTON:
ROBERTS BROTHERS.
1874.

Cambridge:
Press of John Wilson and Son.

WILSON
ALBANY

TO
THE LOVER-HUSBAND OF EIGHTY-FIVE,

These Love Stories are Dedicated

BY
THE LOVER-WIFE OF SIXTY-THREE.

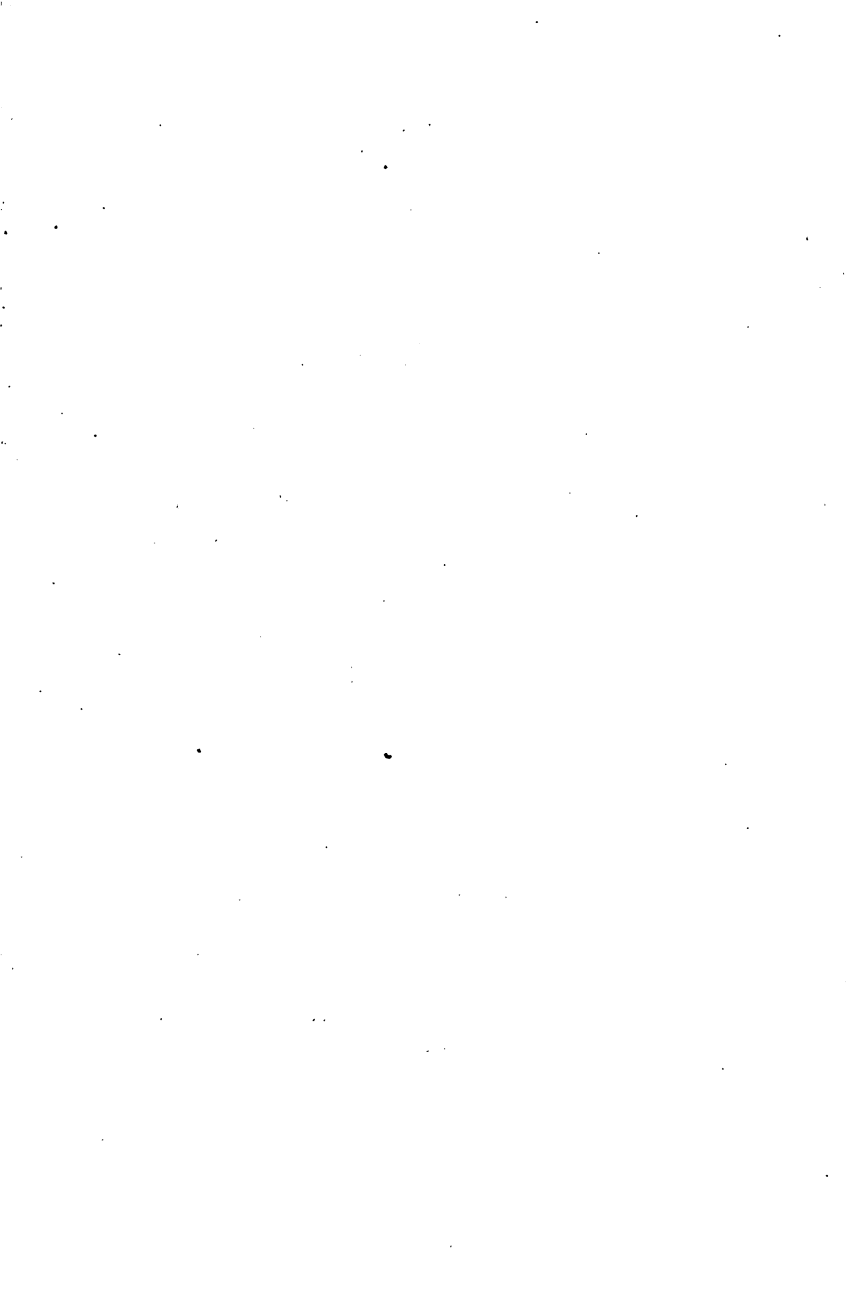
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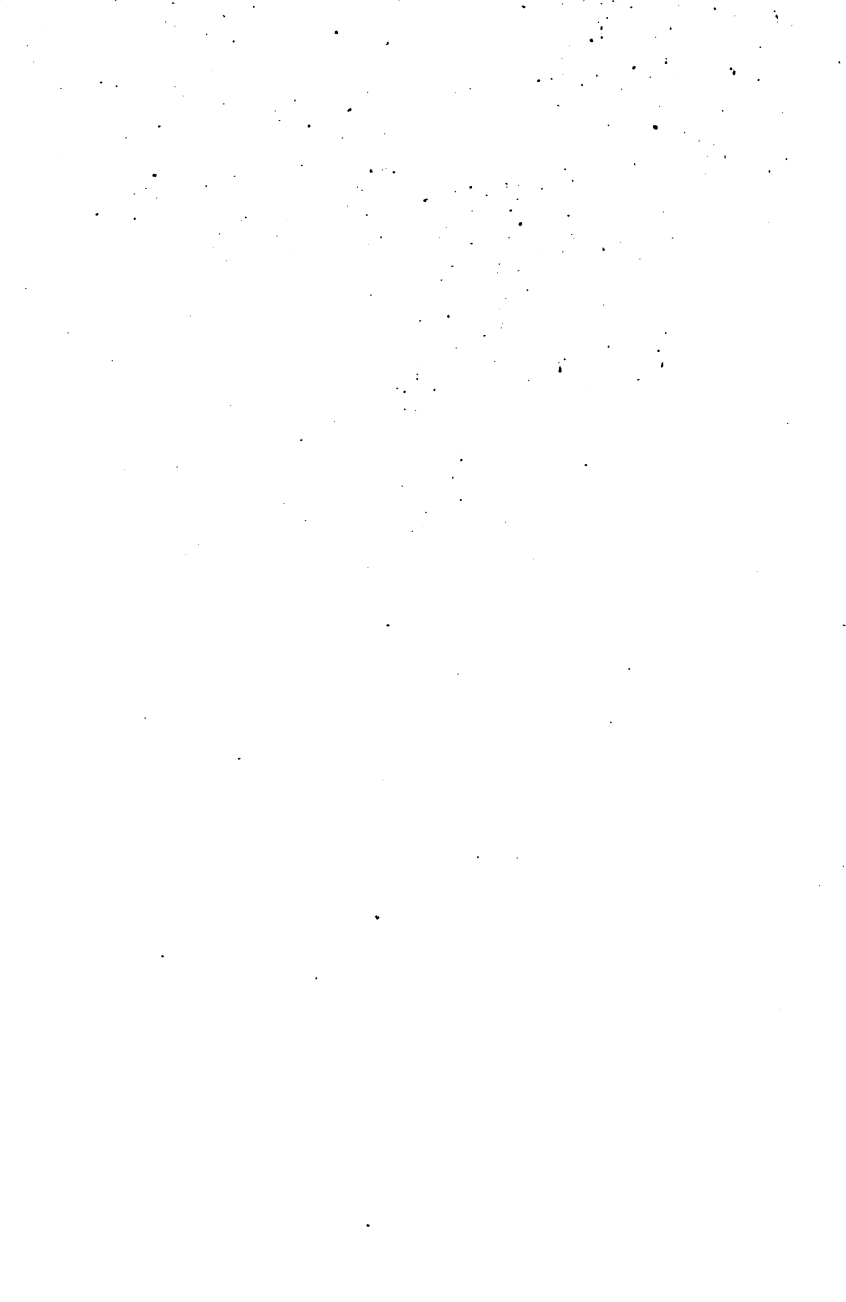


THE versified form in which these two love stories are written was purposely chosen, in order to give effect that should harmonize with the old-world romance in situation and sentiment, blended with more familiar every-day details — the poetic feeling mingled with more prosaic circumstances — which the stories themselves comprise.

MARY COWDEN CLARKE.



THE TRUST.



THE TRUST.

“Wilt thou make a trust a transgression?” — SHAKESPEARE.

Ay, from my very boyhood I had seen
And known her: Clarice Merton of the Hall;
A fine old stately mansion that had been
The seat of all the Mertons since the time
When Tudors reigned. As niece and heiress to
Sir Horace Merton, she was mistress there
Already: for the portly gentleman,
Her uncle, loved the tall fair slender girl
With all a father's fondness; and she queened
It with right royal dignity and grace.
She looked the well-born lady that she was, —
The representative of ancient blood
And birth: her every movement was instinct
With native self-possession, high-bred ease.
Her beauty was imperial, and made
For sway. I well remember, when a lad,

TO YOU
 THE TRUST.

How it subdued myself. I used to see
 Her pass on horseback, with her uncle, through
 The lane that led from Merton Hall, and oft
 I lingered by the way to watch for her.
 There was a roadside stile, half hidden by
 The thickly clustered hedge that shaded it;
 And this was frequently my resting-place.
 Time after time I saw her passing by,
 Until her face and form were graven on
 My mind, and they became thenceforth to me
 The sole embodiment of womanhood's
 Perfection: by the roadside stile again
 And yet again I stood, and gazed my fill.
 She ne'er saw me: or saw me as one sees
 A pebble, twig, or blade of grass, that lies
 Upon the path one treads; a thing of naught;
 A thing unheeded, unremarked; a thing
 That merely makes a part of all around.
 I knew full well both who and what she was:
 But who and what was I? Poor Edward Helme:
 Of humble origin: an orphan left
 In earliest years, and bound apprentice to
 The village stonemason, who thought the lad
 Gave token of intelligence and power

To learn, so took to him, and taught him skill
In carving, modelling, — the more refined,
Artistic portions of his trade, for which
The boy showed aptitude and special taste.

I reached to early manhood thus, absorbed
In two main sources of pursuit and thought :
One, — quiet, steady labor at my work,
Whereat I earned an honest livelihood
And gained my master's still-increased good-will ;
The other, — evening rambles through the fields
And lanes, where I might chance to see at times
The object of my worshipping regard.
If blessed with sight of her, my heart was filled
For days with secret sense of deep content.
I question whether Clarice Merton knew
Of even my existence : but I knew
Of hers ; and that made mine a gladdened one.

It happened that Sir Horace Merton wished
To have some vases for the terrace steps
And balustrade, above the grassy slope
On which the mansion stood : he sent to my
Employer, who despatched me to the Hall
To take instructions. In a tremor of
Excitement I set forth : but none of it

Appeared beneath my usual quiet mien
And sober aspect : I was always known
Among our village folk for gravity
And thoughtful look beyond my years : and they
Would sometimes nickname me " Young Serious."
That day my outward grave composure served
Me well to hide the inward hurry of
My spirits, as I found myself within
Her very presence. She was standing with
Her uncle on the terrace, where they both
Received me : tall and stately even in
Her girlish slenderness and grace, she leaned
Against the marble balustrade and smoothed
Caressingly the gorgeous throat of a
Tame peacock, that with coy reluctance stooped
Its neck to her familiar hand alone.
The while, Sir Horace spoke to me about
The vases ; and I listened to his words
Through all the mist of wilderment in which
My thoughts were wrapped by consciousness of her
And her proximity. Sir Horace talked
With fluent dictate, affable command,
The sort of kindly condescension used
By one who gives his orders to a man

He finds to be proficient in his trade,
A clever artisan and competent.

“A well-informed, intelligent young man,”
I heard Sir Horace say, as he dismissed
Me and rejoined his niece: “Indeed? I did
Not mark him,” she replied with negligence.

They spoke in but a half-low tone, with just
That carelessness of being overheard
Which people sometimes use when only their
Inferiors are by. I felt it to
The core: I was to her no more but simply
The stone-cutter, the mason’s man, the clerk
Sent by his master to receive and note
The orders of Sir Horace Merton for
The vases on the terrace balustrade;
And of no more account than was the stone,
The marble, or the granite that he wrought.
Yet, after all, what more could I expect?
What more was natural? She knew no jot
Of me but what she saw; and that was naught,—
Naught of the inner self, which p’rhaps contained
A something worthy in its quality;
A certain sturdy manfulness and strong
Reliability: at least, my good

And constant friend, my master, used to give
Me credit for possessing these, and I
Believe I had them.

Time went on ; and there
Was coming blankness at the Hall. 'Twas said
Sir Horace Merton's health was far from good,
And that a long sea-voyage was prescribed ;
'Twas added that his niece was going with
Him ; that she would not let him go alone,
Although she dreaded leaving her old home ;
Disliked the sea, and cared not for new scenes ;
Was sure there was no place like Merton Hall,
But told her uncle playfully, 'twas true
She loved it more than any house or lands,
Yet loved him more than house or lands or aught.

All this reached village ears, as doings of
The great are sure to reach their neighbors' ears,
And form the theme of gossip comment : thus
I learned the day was fixed for their departure,
And pictured to myself the void that then
Would yawn around my daily life.

Meantime,

It chanced that my employer had to send
Abroad on confidential business ;

And he chose me to execute the charge.
I willingly obeyed ; for change of scene
And action were the things I could have wished,
To take me from the dull, dead, dreary round
Of days and nights beset with aching sense
Of loss, and absence, and soul's want, that would
Be mine, when Clarice Merton once was gone.

A distant colony my mission had
For goal ; I took my passage in a ship
Was thither bound ; when who should prove to be
My fellow passengers but Clarice and
Her uncle ! My intense surprise to learn
They were on board leaped up like sudden fire
Within my heart, and kindled into blaze
A thousand embers of deep-smouldering joy
That I had thought had been well-nigh extinct.
To find myself thus near her, thus in reach
Of seeing her and hearing her, while I
Remained unnoted, seemed renewal, ay,
And more than a renewal of the old
Enchanted times, when I beheld her pass
Through Merton lanes, a vision pure and fair.
My passage had been taken in the fore
Part of the ship ; while they, of course, were aft,

And had commodious cabins to themselves.
So that I saw them as they walked the deck,
Engaged in chat, and pacing to and fro.
Sometimes she leaned upon his arm ; sometimes
She gave him hers, when he seemed feeble, or
Less well than usual ; always she appeared
The gentle, graceful, and devoted child
Attending on a parent's steps, alive
To all that could alleviate and cheer.
No wonder that he loved her as he did,
Indulging her and making her his all.

One day I heard Sir Horace say to her, —
“Who do you think I fancy that I saw
On board this ship an hour ago?” “I can't
Imagine,” answered she ; “how should I guess?
Some one we know?” “Well, not exactly *know* ;
Some one that we have seen, — a Merton man ;
No other than that well-informed young man
Sent up by White, the mason, to the Hall
To take my orders for the vases. You
Remember him?” “Why — scarcely,” she replied :
“Oh, yes — I think I do ; a quiet, grave
Young man, that you thought well of, did you not?”
“He seemed to me intelligent and skilled,”

Sir Horace said ; “ moreover, struck me as
Remarkably trustworthy, and to be
Relied upon in matters that required
Attention. He impressed me favorably.”
“ He did,” returned she, with an absent air ;
“ I recollect it now ; he did.” “ I wonder what
Has brought him here,” replied her uncle ; “ I
Suppose that White has sent him out on some
Commission to the colony ; I heard
He had some dealings there.” “ Most likely,” she
Responded in a final way, as if
No farther interest attached to what
They talked of. After a short pause, she said,
With animation — “ Uncle, do you know
What I’ve been thinking of ?” “ Of Merton Hall,
Of course,” Sir Horace smiling said ; “ your thoughts
Are always hovering there, like doves around
A dove-cot.” “ I was thinking,” she resumed,
“ Of how the dear old place must now be bathed
In sunset light, and looking at its best.
And yet I know not why I say ‘ its best ;’
It always looks its best — *the* best — to me.”
She laughed at her own sally, and went on
To talk of their return to their loved home.

I saw Sir Horace Merton's face assume
A sudden sad expression : but it cleared
Away again, when she looked up at him.

Some mornings after this I noticed him
Upon the deck alone. As he caught sight
Of me, he beckoned me to join him where
He stood. He spoke most courteously, — nay, with
A kindly, almost friendly tone : he said
It gave him pleasure to have met with one
Who came from Merton village, seeming like
A neighbor, — one long known : he asked my name,
And told me that he took a liking to
Me when I came that time to Merton Hall ;
That I inspired him with belief in my
True faithfulness and manly character.
I bowed my thanks, but nothing said ; I was
So taken by surprise at this address.
“ Away from home,” he said, “ I feel the want
Of some one I can talk to as a friend,
To whom I may confide the fear that stings
Me now acutely, for my niece's sake.
I feel my health is failing fast, and should
I die, she will be left in foreign lands
Alone and unprotected. Helme, if so,

I look to you to guard her, think for her,
Watch over her unceasingly, and see
Her safely home again to Merton Hall.
Remember, Helme, I trust her to your care
When I am gone, if go I must, while we
Are far from home. It may seem strange to place
Such confidence in one of whom I know
So little ; but there's something in your look
That tells me I may safely trust to you,
That you'll be faithful to the trust. Do you
Accept it, Helme ?" — "I do," was all I said,
With earnest firmness. What was in my heart
Myself and my Creator only knew.
"And now," Sir Horace said, "we'll speak no more
Of this ; 'tis understood between us two.
I would not have my niece suspect that I
Have any present cause to fear my death ;
'Twould serve no purpose, and disquiet her."
He turned to speak of other things ; and when
His niece approached, she found him cheerfully
In talk with one of the ship's company,
A sailor, whose long yarns amused him oft.
I kept aloof, thenceforward as before ;
Because I thought I could perceive, for all

Sir Horace thus had spoken to me, that
He cared not I should join him when his niece
Was with him. Whether it was from dread
That Clarice should discover what he feared,
Or whether it proceeded from a sense
That she shared not his good opinion of
Myself, I do not know ; but certain 'tis
I felt that he was better pleased I should
Not speak to him when she was by. Content
It should be thus, I fell again into
My way of watching her from distance, and,
Unseen, unnoticed, making her the one
Bright jewel of my life.

One night there was
Alarm of fire aboard the ship : upon
The instant all was noise, confusion, and
Distress. I started up, threw on my clothes,
And hurried upon deck. Already had
The flames advanced, and now were licking their
Dread way aloft, among the shrouds and rigging.
Amid the burning glare I sudden saw
Sir Horace and his niece, — a ghastly group.
Half dead with terror, she had sunk down at
His feet, and held her face within her hands.

He called to me aloud from where he stood : —
“ For God’s sake, help her if you can, good friend !
Remember, Helme, the charge, the trust, I gave ! ”
He reeled and fell, the moment after, crushed
By falling fragments of a blazing mast.
I snatched her from the spot and drew her towards
A spar I saw, and knew would float ; to which
I fastened her : she made attempt to free
Herself from my endeavor ; but I said :
“ Your uncle charged me to take care of you ;
He trusted you to me, and bade me try
To save you.” Then she yielded, and allowed
Me do whate’er I would that I thought best.

I hardly know how afterwards I found
Myself upon the red-reflected waves,
My precious spar in tow, held by one hand,
While with the other I struck out and swam
For life, for very life, — my own, and one
Far dearer than my own. I made some way :
When all at once there came a noise that seemed
To rend the air asunder, split the sky.
The flames had reached the gunpowder : the ship
Blew up : and not a soul survived the wreck.
But — crowning horror of the whole to me —

The roughness of the surge, the heave, the swell,
At moment when the ship blew up had wrenched
My spar away, had torn it from my grasp,
And borne it out of sight. A long loud cry
Of anguish and despair broke from me, and
I wept aloud in agony of heart.

The roaring waters dashed in mockery
Against my face, and swept my tears away
As fast as they welled forth. Instinctively
I struggled on ; but now had lost my wish
For safety. What was life henceforth to me ?
Why should I try to save it if I could
Not save the one was life of life to me ?
The bitter misery of that lone hour,
When, toiling on through buffet of the waves,
The fierce emotions raging in my soul
Were wilder than the horrors of the night,
I shudder to recall : but after I
Had swum a weary space, and felt upon
The point of sinking, I became aware
That I was now in smoother water, where
My feet touched ground. Another stroke or two
Soon brought me to the shore. A scene it was
Of almost magic beauty and repose :

A tropic moon shed broad effulgence o'er
A stretch of wooded sward that skirted round
A sheltered bay ; tall palm-trees rose against
A starry sky of deep and cloudless blue ;
Unbroken silence reigned : but all this peace
And harmony of loveliness externe
Contrasted with the war within myself.
"Why did I escape when she is lost ?"
Was still the cry of my distracted heart.
I wrung my hands, and flung myself full length ;
Then started up, and wandered madly on,
I knew not, cared not whither, in my grief.
Along the margin of the moon-lit bay
My steps conveyed me, till I saw before
Me on the ground a prostrate form : I sprang
To it : oh, joy of joy ! 'Twas hers, 'twas hers !
Borne onward by the influx of the tide,
The spar had drifted safely towards the shore,
And landed on the bay's smooth shelving sand.
She senseless lay ; her eyes were closed ; her hair
Hung loose in tangled masses, scattered wide.
A piteous sight : but, still, she breathed, she lived !
I gently disengaged her from the spar ;
I raised her tenderly from off the sand,

And carried her to where the greensward made
A better resting-place. I chafed her hands ;
And soon I had the comfort of a change :
A flutter of the breath, a quiver of
The eyelids : then the eyes were opened with
A dreamy wandering look that finally
Met mine. " You know me ? " whispered I ; " you do ? "
" Yes ; — yes ; — I think you are the person that
My uncle liked." She sighed and closed her eyes ;
As though 'twere too much effort yet to think.
Just near to where we were there was a knoll
Of rocky moss-grown ground, in which I saw
A deep recess, a hollow, like a cave :
To this I bore her ; placed her on a couch
Of soft dry leaves I piled up high, and left
Her to the healing balm of sleep.

I kept
Incessant watch that night around the cave,
But naught approached to frighten or molest.
The place seemed desert, perfect solitude ;
But whether it were continent or isle
I knew not. It abounded with wild fruits ;
Among the bluffs and cliffs beyond the bay
A multitude of sea-birds laid their eggs ;

Innumerable shell-fish swarmed the beach,
And clustered on dwarf rocks beneath the cliffs :
So, food there lacked not in this land of fair
Seclusion.

After the first violence
Of grief had passed for her loved uncle's loss,
Sweet Clarice drooped into an apathy,
A languor of indifference to all
Around, the most pathetic : she took note
Of nothing, interest in nothing, cared
For nothing, ate the meals I brought, arranged
The flowers I culled, accepted all I did,
And acquiesced in all I ventured to
Suggest for her behoof ; but, listlessly,
And with a perfect quietude, she showed
That she did not intend to rouse herself ;
She meant to be her own sole guide ; she held
Her will alone responsible to rule
Her ways ; and if her ways were moody, sad,
Why, sad and moody they should be, if so
She chose. She surely was the mistress and
Best judge of her own acts ? and to preserve
Volition independently of me ?
To live her life thus irrespectively of

My approval? She seemed resolved to let
Me see how, notwithstanding fate had thrown
Her on my hands, she still reserved her right
Of born supremacy. All this was not
Asserted; nay, far from it. But it was
To be inferred from every look and tone, —
The eloquence of tacit, passive will
In ladies of high birth to one beneath
Themselves.

One evening, when I brought
Her supper of wild honey, bread-fruit, and
Some pearly eggs, I was about to leave
Her that I might go eat my own apart
As usual. With a slight and languid lift
Of her bent head, she murmured: "Where do you
Contrive to lodge? You make this cave my house, —
A very roomy, comfortable one it is,
With tapestry of moss, and curtained well
By long festoons of pendent climbing plants;
A perfect bower of graceful green-clad warmth,
Yet shade; a mingling of dry roof, dry walls,
With freshness of the open air, due heat
And cool combined; just what a house should be, —
But where do you reside?" I told her I

Had shelter found within a crevice-nook
Of rock, not far from her house-cave. "And is
It tolerably habitable?" she
Inquired, with half a smile. "We're neighbors still,
It seems, as we were formerly, I heard.
Oh, by the bye, what is your name? I don't
Know even that; and it is fit I know
My neighbor's name." I told her it was Helme.
"A name most suitable, indeed," she said,
A little scornfully. "You've been the helm
To guide me into port, to steer me safe,
And to control my course e'er since you brought
Me to this haven; but a helm's control,
You know, exists on sea and not on land;
It ceases to have power when on shore."
"A helm exerts his agency when need
Demands, and when the helmsman's hand doth sway,"
I answered quietly: "the hand doth rule,
The helm doth but obey the hand. Your hand
Shall give the signal when the helm exceeds
Its proper office." I withdrew as I
Said this; and afterwards I noticed that
Her manner changed to less of frigidness
And distance. But it varied much; and she

Was sometimes querulous, perverse, just like
A petted saucy child ; at others, she
Was pensive, absent, wrapped in her own thoughts ;
But always ladylike and polished, and
Supreme in native beauty most refined.

In one of her despondent moods, I tried
To waken in her a desire to see
And know more of the place in which we lived :
To visit some adjacent spots that in
Themselves were charming, and commanded views
Of exquisite enchantment ; for I knew
That exercise and freshened interest
In all that Nature had so plenteously
Bespread around us on this fertile land
Of rich production, beautiful, profuse,
And genial in extreme, would serve to bring
Her back to healthfuller condition. “ Will
You not attempt a walk to yonder point,
Miss Merton ? ” I once asked. “ You know not how
Transcendent is the prospect thence attained.
It grandly stretches far along the coast
Beyond this bay, and is a matchless scene.
The headland is within your easy reach,
And will not over-tax your strength to climb.”

“I am not easily fatigued,” she said ;
“I thank you, but I care not for fine views,
New scenes. I told my uncle so, once on
A time,” she sadly added ; “there’s no place
To equal Merton Hall, in my regard.”
“Alas, that you must wait ere you can hope
To see it !” I replied. “Who knows if I
Shall ever see the dear old place again !”
She said with falling tears, then checked herself,
And muttered : “Ah, — this walk — suppose I were
To take it after all? I may as well,
Since *you* think it would do me good ; you are
My medical adviser, Doctor Helme,
As well as my adviser general,
You know, at present, when I must depend
On you for counsel, as for all.” She spoke
With touch of bitterness in her sad tone ;
Then said abruptly : “Forgive me ; I
Am most ungracious, and ungrateful too,
I feel ; but you will pardon what must seem
Ingratitude for all that you have done
And been to me, when you remember my
Indulgent nurture, from my earliest years.
It little did to well prepare me for

The trials I have met with, and the strange
Sad fate that has been mine." "More strange than e'en
Your own sad fate appears to me the word
Of 'pardon' in your mouth, as asked by you
From me, Miss Merton," I returned; "'forgive'
I cannot, since there's nothing to forgive."
"There is," she answered quickly; "ah, there is;
I know it but too well; I'm angry with
Myself when I think over my remiss
Unthankfulness to you, kind Helme, who saved
My life at sea, and have preserved it since.
I do not think I should have been so base,
So wanting in due gratitude, while I
Was mistress of our old ancestral home.
How is it that I've altered thus, and grown
So other than my girlish self?" She turned
Away, as she concluded, and set forth
To take the rambling walk I had proposed.
On her return she came to where I was
Engaged in fashioning a rude attempt
At garden near her cave, and stood beside
Me while I trained some climbing roses up:
She watched me silently for a brief space,
Then said abruptly, "What was it you meant, —

Aboard the burning ship, when, firm and strong,
You lashed me to the saving spar, — by those
Few words you said, ‘Your uncle charged me to
Take care of you ; he trusted you to me ’?
What did they mean ?” “They meant what they expressed ;
For once Sir Horace gave you to my charge,
Enjoined me to watch over you, to guard
You if he died while in a foreign land,
And see you safely back to Merton Hall.”
“He did ?” “He did ; he dreaded that his death
Might happen any unexpected time,
And leave you unprotected, far from home.
No less he dreaded that his fear might reach
Yourself, and keep you haunted with alarm
For him.” “Dear uncle, ever thoughtful, kind,
And provident for welfare of your child,
Your Clarice !” she exclaimed. “Then this was what
Your own words signified, when ’mid the flames
I heard you cry, ‘Remember, Helme, the charge,
The trust I gave !’” “It was,” I said ; “you heard
Them, then, yourself ?” “I heard them plainly,” she
Replied ; “and wondered, even in that wild
And fearful moment, at his strange accost.

And surely 'twas most strange he should intrust
His niece to one well-nigh unknown and quite
Unproved." "There are some natures thus at once
Confiding, ready to believe in what
They think they see plain written in a face
Of honest look," I answered. "True," she said ;
"There are ; and my dear uncle had himself
This readiness to put his faith in those
He thought seemed worthy of his confidence.
And so, it now appears, he trusted you.
He gave me to your charge in solemn trust,
You say ; what were the special points enjoined
By this same trust? How far does it extend?"
"I told you," I replied ; "it bade me guard,
Watch over you, and do my utmost to
Ensure your safety while away from home ;
And then to see you safely back again
To Merton Hall." "My 'safety,'" partly to
Herself repeated she ; "and then to see
Me 'safely' back to Merton Hall. Ay, 'safe'
And well protected, ever was his care
That I should be ; my kind good uncle!" As
She murmured these last words she moved away,
And went into the cave to sit alone.

But, some time after, she returned again
To subject of the trust. It happened thus.
I had been warning her against too late
Protracting her long walks — which often now
She took — at eventide. “It is the hour
Of sunset that is most especially
To be avoided,” I had said. “In these
Hot climates, while the sun is going down,
There comes a sudden chill into the air,
Insidious, treacherous, and not to be
Encountered without really perilous
Effect: I hope, I beg, you will not thus
Run risk of being out at just that hour
Of danger.” “What! grave Doctor Helme again
Prescribing? Is it his good pleasure that
I make my exercise, my air, my hours,
Accord with his opinion, his most sage
Decree? Is this included in the trust
He undertook? Does it empower him
To guard my health, to watch my hours, dispose
My time, appoint my walks?” “The trust enjoined
Me to keep watch, to guard, and to ensure
Your safety with my utmost care; I know
It is not safe to walk at sunset, and

I frankly tell you so, in consonance
With one injunction of the trust which I
Intend to steadily fulfil throughout,
If so I be permitted," I replied.
" Permitted ? " echoed she ; " by me, you mean ? "
" By Heaven's will and blest vouchsafement," I
Returned. She paused an instant ; then resumed :
" Am I to understand that you engaged
In this same trust — and now intend to use
The full authority it gives for you
To carry out its dictates, and perform
The duties it enjoins — in deference
To my dear uncle's wish, or for the sake
Of benefiting me ? Was it alone
Because you thought to satisfy his mind,
Or from the thought that I require your care ? —
In short, to please my uncle, or please me,
Did you accept, and now enforce this trust ? "
" There could have been no thought of pleasing you,
Miss Merton, when I pledged myself to take
The trust your uncle gave. He charged me to
Fulfil it faithfully ; and so I mean to do,
Please God ! " She said no more, but turned to look
At some white blossoms, growing close at hand.

Another time, a captiousness, a half
Caprice and lady wilfulness displayed
Themselves in her demeanor. "I have found
Some little purple blossoms that remind
Me of sweet English violets ; I thought
That you would like them planted near
Your cave, Miss Merton, so have brought you home
These clumps with roots." "I thank you, Helme," she
said ;

But looked another way, with careless air.
The Merton lane, the roadside stile, the hedge
Near which I had so often lingered that
I might have chance of seeing Clarice pass,
And where I used to see the violets
In spring-time lurk beneath that hedge, came full
Upon my mind ; but memory I quenched,
And said sedately : "Will you tell me where
You best would like them placed, Miss Merton ? They
Require the shade, and, if you please, I'll plant
Them here." I pointed to the spot I meant.
She did not answer for a moment ; and
I looked at her for my directions. Then,
Still keeping her fair face half turned away :—
"Pray call me Clarice," she exclaimed, in a

Disdainful pettish way ; “ I cannot bear
The name ‘ Miss Merton ; ’ it reminds me of
My old lost home and all its bygone joys.”
I started ; I had used it to myself
A thousand times, — her sweet, sweet Christian name ;
But use it to herself I dared not ; no,
I dared not ; for I knew how it would stir
My manhood, and betray the love I vowed
To keep concealed within my heart.
“ I cannot call you so, excuse me,” I
Replied ; “ I cannot do it, e’en to please
Yourself ; forgive me.” “ Oh,” she quickly said,
“ I make no point of it, since you will not
Comply. Pray please yourself, not me ; I care
Not what I’m called, not I, now happiness
Is gone.” She burst into a passion of
Sad tears ; and there was nothing left for me
To do but try and soothe her grief. At times
She was thus petulant and wayward ; but
At others gentle, smiling, docile to
My slightest wish. I could not make her out.
And yet sometimes I now began to have
A fancy I could guess but only too,
Too well what wrought these changes in her mood.

I was dismayed at my own thought, and put
It from me when it would recur and still
Recur.

Next time we were together, she
Was in a sportively despotic vein.
“As you would not consent to call me by
My Christian name,” she said, “now tell me yours :
I want to know it.” “Mine is Edward,” I
Replied. “A good old Saxon name,” she said ;
“One borne by British kings. I like it well ;
And somewhere I have read its meaning is,—
Stay—‘Happy Guarder,’ ‘Keeper,’ ‘Warder.’ Ay,
It is ; I recollect ; and suited to yourself
No less than is your surname. Let me see ;
I like not surnames in a woman’s mouth
Addressed to men. I think henceforth I’ll call
You Edward Helme ; it so exactly hits
Your character. Yes—Edward—Edward ;” she
Repeated in approving tone ; “it sounds
Appropriate and true.” To hear her thus
Repeat my name, affected me with strange
Emotion ; but, according to my wont,
I held my feelings under strong control,
And naught appeared of agitation in

My speech or look. I more and more resolved
On this, the more I grew confirmed in my
Suspicion of the source from whence arose
These variable moods. What would have made
My proudest, fondest hope, had she been where
She could have still remained free mistress of
Herself to give or to withhold, now formed
My torture. Here, in this lone wilderness, —
Dependent as she was upon myself
For sustenance, for all, — and where no rite
Of holy union could be ours, — how dared
I risk betrayal of my love, which might
Draw forth the sweet confession of her own
For me, if such indeed existed? Should
I break my faith and violate the trust
So solemnly confided to my charge, —
So solemnly accepted by myself?
No; never: come what might, I would be true
And loyal to the death. None knew the cost,
The struggle, the incessant agony
Of this protracted strife between my love
And my resolve, but God: and He gave strength
To vanquish self, and to preserve my trust.
“Your good sea-jacket looks the worse for wear,”

She once said, smiling with a half shy glance
At it ; " I wish you'd let me mend this rent."
Then, recollecting, she went on : " But, ah,
Forgetful that I am ! I have no thread,
No needle, nothing that a woman should
Possess who claims to be good huswife, as
I was at home." " A huswife ? You ! " I cried.
" Why not ? A Lady of the Manor should
Be notable, remedial, practical,
Well able to perform all useful things."
" Is mending Edward Helme's apparel one ?
Strange task, methinks, for any lady ; for
A Lady of the Manor, above all."
" It may be strange, but strange has been the lot
Of this poor Lady of the Manor," said
Sweet Clarice, pensively ; " and strange tasks fall
To those who suffer strange reverse. Why should
I not perform a simple office for
A friend who has performed such onerous
And endless ones for me ? " " A friend ? " I said,
In lowest tone ; " do you call Edward Helme
A friend ? " " A more than friend," she answered with
A faltering voice ; " an earthly providence,
One sent by Providence itself to help

Me in my utmost need. What would have been
My fate had you not saved and tended me? —
Become my good protector and my friend?
I well may call you 'friend,' " concluded she
With earnestness. I made her no reply:
How could I, and preserve my secret still?
We both remained in silence for a time:
And then I quietly arose, and went
To find some work: some good hard work might serve
To quell the torment I endured. For I
Had found that manual labor, bodily
Exertion, best assuaged the tumults of
My mind. And thus I made a hundred things
Were needed for the cave: odd, useful, quaint
Utensils of ornate device, and form
Antique: her moss-grown house of rock was filled
With plates and dishes, drinking-cups and jugs,
Or graceful pateras for holding flowers,
Deft moulded from the clay and baked in the
Hot furnace of a tropic sun; with knacks
And trifles, curiously carved and wrought
In wood by my good clasp-knife, which, most true
To boyish habit, never left me, and
Was in my pocket when I 'scaped the wreck.

While working hard for Clarice I less felt
The trouble at my heart: and, as I toiled,
I whistled softly to myself some old
Remembered tune or village song.

When next

We met, she had resumed her cold reserve ;
Which gave way once — but once again — before
It settled into steadily maintained
Return to freezing distance, as of old.
The conflicts I went through, the strict restraints
I put upon myself, the guard I kept
On every speech and word, on every look
And tone, began to tell severely on
My frame, as now I learned from what she said :—
“ You are not looking well ; you’re pale, you’re thin.
You work too hard, — you toil from morn to night ;
You ought to have some rest. Let me prescribe, —
I followed your prescriptions once, you know,
So now take mine. I used to be a kind
Of Lady Bountiful, among the odds
And ends of things I did as Lady of
The Manor. Let me order you some rest ;
You are not looking well, — indeed you’re not.”
Her eyes dwelt gently on my face, her hand

Was raised as if about to lay itself
On mine ; her tone was womanly and low, —
Nay, tender, in its soft persuasiveness.
I was so moved, so passionately moved,
By her appeal, that for a moment I
Had nigh forgotten all, — my pledge, my vowed
Forbearance, and my trust ; but tore myself
Away in time and left her. “ Stony, hard,
Insensible, she must believe me ! ” I
Exclaimed, as, writhing under my distress,
I plunged into the forest depths, that I
Might wrestle with my pangs alone. In her
Unconscious innocence, how should she know
Or understand the reason why I must
And ought to shun the growing tokens
Of her most generous affection, if
I still would keep my plighted word, my faith,
My honor, in allegiance to my trust ?
“ For her dear sake, for hers, I must and will ! ”
Was ever now the secret sentence which
Sustained me through my fierce ordeal fire,
And kept my courage constant to the last.
The last was close at hand. Soon after our
Late interview, we clear descried a ship

That neared our coast, put in for water to
Our bay, and proved to be a merchantman,
Far driven from its course by adverse winds.
The captain took us both on board, and we
Set sail for England.

On the voyage home
Fair Clarice held the level calm of her
Indifference and lady quietude ;
It served at once to re-establish the
Old space that set herself and me apart ;
It tended more than aught else could have done
To cast behind us the strange episode
Of desert life that we together spent,
As something done with, past, for ever gone.
She was all suavity and graciousness ;
Presented me to the sea-captain as
The saver and preserver of her life ;
She praised my courage and fidelity ;
Dwelt largely on the energy and zeal,
The spirit and the self-possession I
Displayed amid the horrors of the wreck ;
Still making *that*, and not our desert life,
The theme of her repeated narrative.
It wrung my heart to hear her thus polite,

Thus courteous, bland, conventional, and marked
In her acknowledgment of what I'd done.
But I accepted patiently her will,
Her tacitly expressed decree, that I
Should be again no more than Edward Helme,
That she should be again Miss Merton of
The Hall. I sometimes felt inclined to smile
A little bitterly at this decree,
When I remembered the relations in
Which lately we had stood together ; she
The helpless, homeless waif, tossed to and fro
By unregardful waves, then cast ashore
Like some stray piece of sea-weed, broken from
Its fellows, till up-gathered by the hand
Of one that sees its native beauty, and
Doth keep it, value it, nay, treasure it
For its inherent loveliness and grace :
While I, the finder of the waif, did play
The part of keeper, guarder, treasurer,
In tender recognition of its worth.
She said the name of Edward meant as much,
And I was happy in the privilege
Of being to her these. Well, if she chose
To re-exchange the characters we played,

And be to me protectress and benign
Approver, I would let her so esteem
Herself : but, once arrived on English land,
I, too, would back return to my old first
Condition, — quiet watcher from afar.
On one occasion, while on board, it chanced
That she and I were left together, as
She leaned against the side and watched the stars,
That one by one came peering forth, while in
The east the sky was deepening into blue
Of darker tint, when crimson sunlight failed.
She held her head averted, fixed in gaze
Upon the firmament, the while she said :
“ You soon will be relieved of your strange charge,
Your troublesome and duty-burdened trust,
Of which you have most faithfully discharged
So many of the points imposed by my
Lost uncle. I, obedient to his will,
Have all along submitted to his terms
Without complaint, and so I still intend
To do, until you see me safely home again ;
As bidden by the trust. When once we're there
The limits of this vaguely worded trust
Can be defined, adjusted ; for, you know,

We never could agree exactly what
It was that it enjoined. But this can wait
Till we arrive." She stayed for no reply,
But left me standing 'neath the starry sky.
To that mute comforter I inwardly appealed
Against the stabs her words had been to me.

We reached beloved England ; and when there
I thought we should have parted company
At once ; but on my showing this to be
My expectation, she declared the trust
Would not be validly performed until
I saw her "safely home." That "home" did not
Mean English land alone, but, in her case,
Meant Merton, her belov'd ancestral home ;
"The words, you told me, of my uncle's charge
Were, 'See her safely back to Merton Hall,'
You know ; so there you still will have to go."
I acquiesced, and I escorted her
Unto the very gates, where she was met
By friends and tenantry with welcome loud
And joyfullest amaze, as one thought dead,
But now returned to be once more the prized
Young mistress of the mansion and domain.
I made escape from all of this as soon

As I discreetly could, and took my leave.
She gave a smile of gracious, affable
Farewell, while saying, "Pray remember, I
Expect that you will come some day, when we
Can settle any farther claims the trust
May justify." I merely bowed, and straight
Withdrew, reflecting on the words she used:—
"She spoke of 'claims.' What claims? I have no claims
To make: no claim upon her gratitude,
If that were what she meant." And I resolved
That I would go no more to Merton Hall.
Rejoicings grand and festive took place there,
To grace her first arrival, and 'twas thought
A round of gay assemblages would then
Have followed these: but Clarice Merton lived
A life retired, sequestered, when she had
Performed the hostess-duty that she owed
To greeters in her circle of kind friends.
Deep mourning worn for her lost uncle was
The cause assigned for this complete and close
Seclusion from society; and she
Was left to follow her own chosen course.

Meanwhile I also had returned to Merton; sought
My old employer; found him friendly as

He ever had been towards me, and he gave
Me cordial welcome ; told me how the news
Had reached him of the wreck : how he believed
I perished in the burning ship ; and how
He felt assured that only accident
Akin to this would e'er have hindered me
From executing his commission ; for
He knew my faithfulness of old, he said
With his approving smile of fatherly
Regard. He made me take up quarters in
His house, as I had always done : but now
He treated me more like a son than clerk.
“ I'm growing an old man,” he said, “ and feel
The want of help and younger energy
In our good trade : from you, Ned, I can count
On both, I know ; so stay with me, and give
Me what I need.” And thus it was arranged.

I heard from time to time, through village talk,
Of Clarice. It was said she lived alone,
Was seldom seen beyond the Merton grounds,
Except on some kind quiet errand of
Benevolence and gentle charity ;
Some visit to a cottage, where distress
Or illness called for aid and sympathy :

Unostentatiously and privately
She went about, engaged in doing good.

A thirst, a yearning, irrepressible,
To see her once again, took feverish
Possession of me : I grew restless and
Unable to resist the strong desire
To wander forth in hope of one last chance
That I might look upon her face, — myself
Unseen, unknown, — ere I took leave of it
For ever. In the throb, the rack of my
Fierce longing, I believed that if I could
Behold her but once more, I would persuade
My master to employ me where I might
Promote his interests away from our
Small country village ; then resolve to go
And never to return, till snow of age
Had settled on my head and on my heart.

Urged by my burning wish, I took my way
One evening to Merton Lane, and leaned
Upon the stile, deep musing on the strange
And varied scenes I had beheld since last
I lingered in this tranquil place. My thoughts
Were soothed to something like serenity
By all its peaceful sweetness and repose :

The trees were coming into leaf, the birds
Were chirping their last hymn before the sun
Went down ; a green delicious twilight shed
Its softened shade upon the fading gold
Of western glow. Ere quite 'twas passed, I spied
Beneath the hedge some modest violets
Just peering 'mid the grass. With eagerness,
I stooped to gather the sweet blossoms, fraught
With thousand memories as fragrant as
Themselves : I fondled them, I pressed them to
My lips, inhaled their odorous breath, and
Unconsciously I murmured low-toned words
Of soft address to them ; when something near,
A shadow, a dark form, attracted my
Attention, and I saw a lady, tall,
And clothed in black, was standing but a pace
Or two from where I was. So noiseless
Had been her approach, and now so motionless,
So silently, so phantom-like she stood,
That well I might have thought she was her own
Departed spirit, conjured to my side
By my intense remembrance of herself :
But, at a glance, I knew 'twas Clarice, and
With hasty impulse thrust the violets

Quick in my breast, and hid them there. She smiled, —
I thought disdainfully, — and turned away
Without a word. I walked as in a dream,
Returning home like one who had beheld
The spectre of his own dead happiness.

That night there came a note from Merton Hall :
It ran : “ May I ask you to come to me
To-morrow ? ” Signed “ C. M. : ” No more. Its curt
Expression, cold politeness, all seemed meant
To show me distantly and freezingly
That I was naught to her ; that I was but
The young man, Edward Helme ; she, well-born, rich,
The Lady of the Hall : and yet, to me,
As I stood gazing on those two well-formed
And clear-cut letters of her name, she rose
Before me as herself alone, the one
Sole woman I had worshipped when a boy ;
The woman I had faithfully preserved
From e'en myself and her own guilelessness
When chance intrusted her to me and my
Protecting care in manhood : peerless, fair,
Devoid of any grace conferred by birth
Or wealth, her own sweet self presented still
To my adoring thought the image of pure,

Of womanly perfection.

Sleep for me

Was none that night.

Next morning I went up
To Merton Hall ; and on the way I schooled
My beating heart to quietude might vie
With hers, — that calm and frigid quietude
I knew too well in all its lady force
Of well-bred distance and cold courtesy.

I found her on the terrace, as before :
No peacock now was on the balustrade ;
But on her shoulder perched a little dove,
That from her palm took grain. She bowed her head
To me as I approached ; but still went on
Attending to her bird, that fed at ease.
Her color varied ; but she strove to keep
Both look and voice composed, as she, with eyes
Still bent upon the dove, said : —

“ You would not

Oblige me by remembering my request
To come, that we might settle any claims
Remaining unfulfilled of the old trust ;
I had to summon you by letter, and
Subdue whatever lady's pride forbade

My writing to remind you of my wish :
But I may well afford to sacrifice
A little of punctilio, sure, for you ;
Since in our desert life were levelled all
The usual forms of civilized regard
To set observances, distinctions, and
Conventional appointed rules." "You speak
Of 'claims,'" I answered ; "I am not aware
That any claims exist. I tried, with all
My best endeavor, to perform the points
The trust enjoined ; and I believe they all
Had been fulfilled, when I had brought you here,
And seen you safely home to Merton Hall."
"Ah, yes, we never could agree in what
Those points consist ; and therefore 'twas I asked
You to come hither, that we might decide
How far they reach, and how much they include.
You think them ended by your escort home :
You think protection, guard, and watchfulness
No longer needed for me, now I am
Returned to safety and to Merton Hall ?
You think your care for me may cease now I
Have once resumed my station and my rank
As Lady of the Manor — mistress of this place ?"

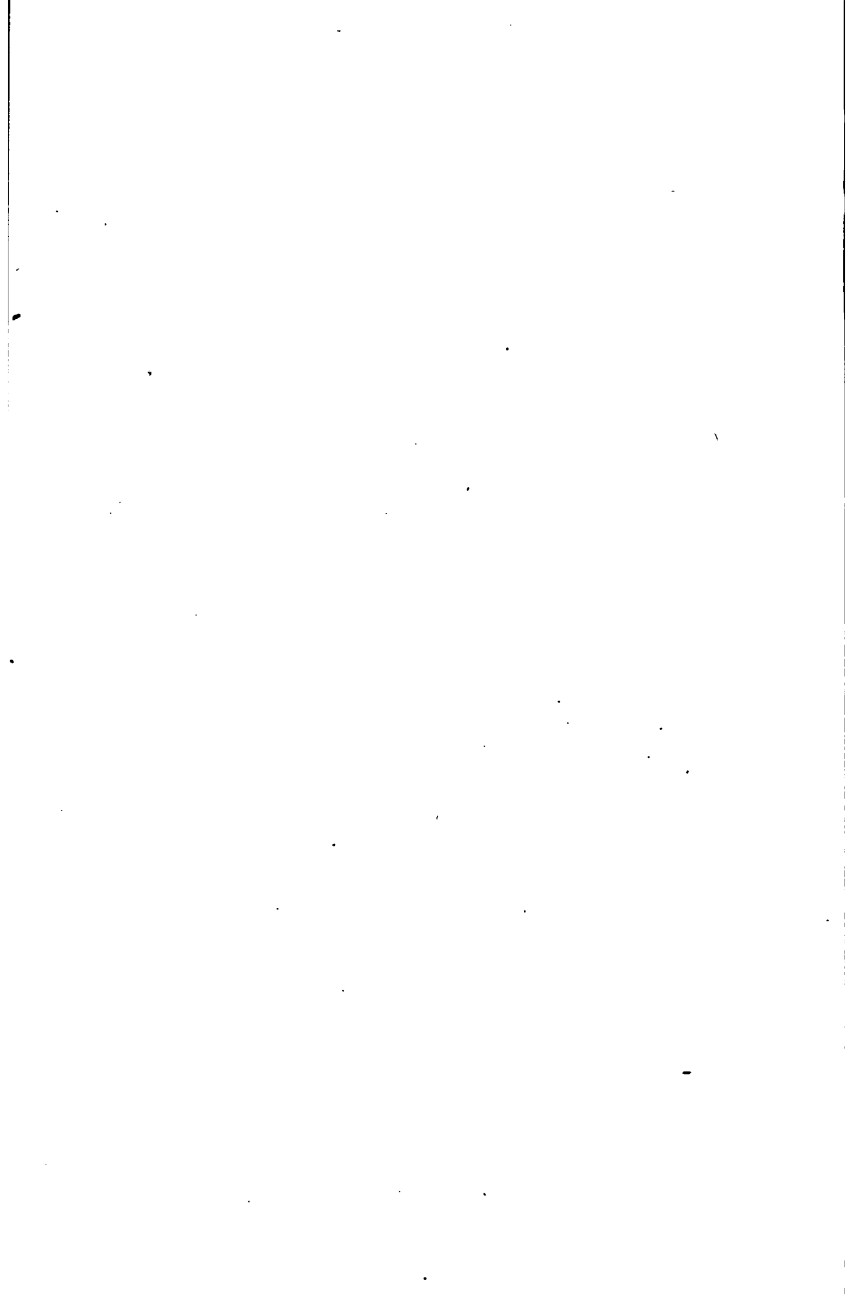
There was a break in her sweet voice as she
Pronounced the words "your care for me," and that
Old playful title used between us in
Our desert life ; but with recovered tone
Of steadiness, she hurried on : " You think
Your task concluded, and my uncle's charge
Completed now? Perchance it is, as you
Regard the trust and all the claims it gives
Me on your guardianship. But may not I
Perceive some claims yet unfulfilled? May I
Not feel I may advance my claim to show
The grateful sense I have, and ever shall
Retain, of your devoted, manly care :
Heroic bravery in saving me,
Unceasing labor, forethought, fortitude
For me, unfailing firmness, tolerance
Throughout, when whims of woman mood must oft
Have sorely tried your patience? Do you think
That I possess no claims? My uncle's charge
And trust, I know, must sure include the claim
His Clarice has to show her gratitude."
"Your gratitude is not what I would have ;
If any guerdon be my due, there is

One, higher far, I dare not, may not ask."
My heart gave a wild bound when I perceived
She shrank not at my words: I took her hand,
And held it in my own with firm close grasp :.
"I never will ask this, if you forbid."
The dove had flown away ; but the soft eyes
Of Clarice still were downward bent, as she,
In gentle whispered tone, said : —

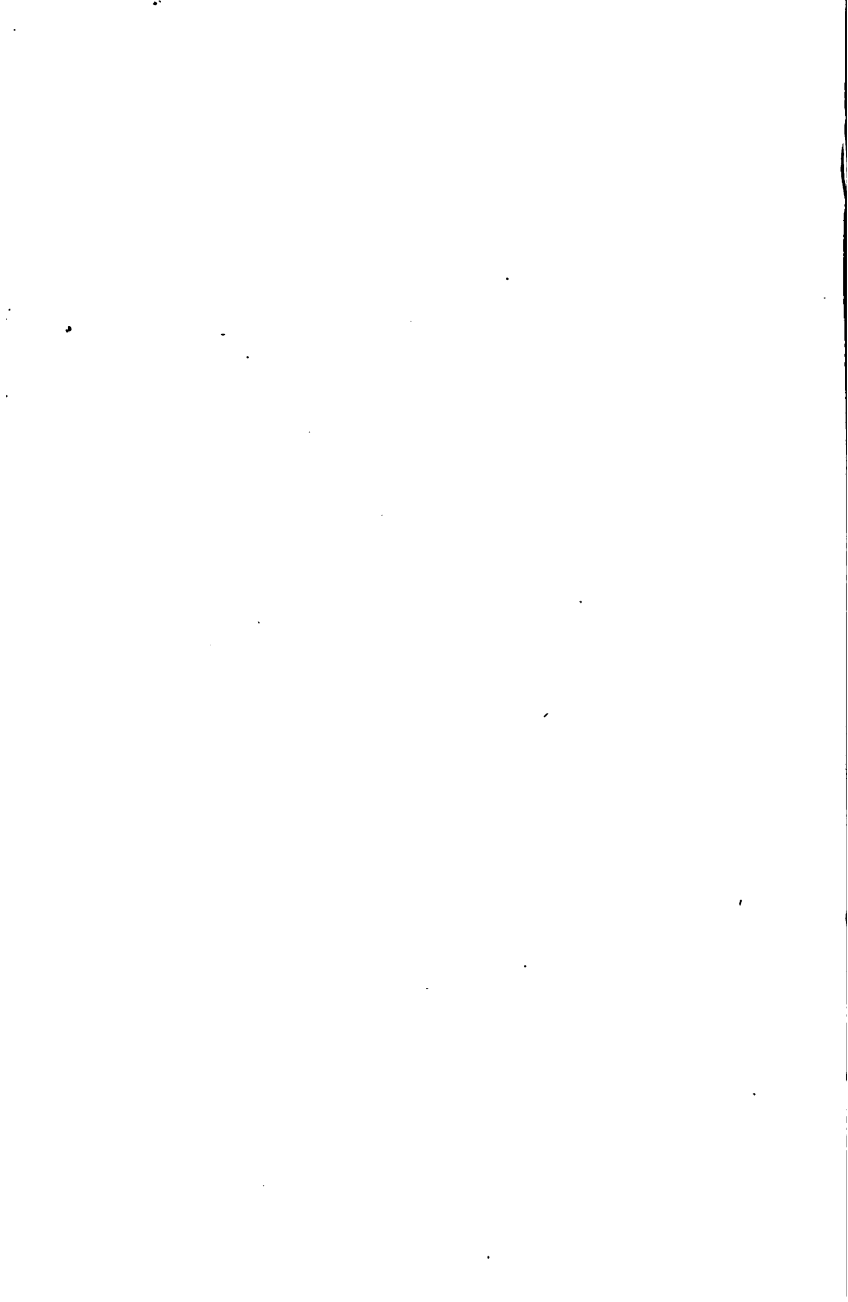
"Will you tell
Me what it was that made you treat those flowers
So strangely in the lane last night?" "You ask
The truth?" "I ask the truth." "In one word lies
The truth ; but will you bear to hear it? Will
You not resent the truth?" "I ask it," she
Repeated, quietly. "Then know 'twas love,
Love long ago conceived, love ever since
Concealed with careful painfullest attempt
To bury it within the depths of my
Own heart. 'Twas love that took me to the lane
In boyhood, that I might have chance to see
Fair Clarice riding by ; 'twas love that made
My rapture when I saved her from the sea ;
'Twas love that made my torture when I dared

Not let her see my passion in our home
Of desert life, lest she might grow to care
For me, and even learn (oh, mingled bliss
And anguish!) to return my faithful love,
When no all-hallowed rite of sacred tie
Could there be ours: 'twas love and burning wish
To see her, if but once again, that brought
Me to the lane last night, and made me press
The violets with fervor passionate,
In thought of her and our sweet desert life.”
“How could I guess 'twas love?” she softly said;
“Your manner was so strange, so grave, reserved,
Constrained, so almost — as it seemed to me —
Averse.” “For *your* sake it was so; for yours.
All guardless, innocent, protectionless,
As you were then, how could I be but thus,
If I would not betray my charge, my trust?”
“And now?” she asked, with frank, bewitching smile;
“Well, now, you are Miss Merton of the Hall,
While I am only” — “Noblest, purest, best,
And truest-hearted man!” she warmly said,
With eyes that sparkled through bright jewel tears;
“The sea-bruised girl cast at your very feet

By tossing waves you took up tenderly,
You treated with all delicate respect
For womanhood, you cherished, treasured her, —
What should she be but yours?" I clasped her to
My heart: she was my own by her free gift:
My TRUST was trusted to me evermore.



THE REMITTANCE.



THE REMITTANCE.

“A good woman is worth gold.”

YOUNG Bernard Thorpe and Richard Middleton
Were friends, fast friends, from time when they were
chums

At school. A lively, sanguine, clever youth
Was Richard ; while his friend was earnest and
Industrious, content to win by slow

Degrees. Dick Middleton was rather for
An enterprise of dash and sudden gain ;
While Bernard Thorpe preferred a steady rise,
By diligence and perseverance earned.

Before they were of age they both were launched
In life, pursuing each the course was best
Adapted to his character ; and ere

Some years were passed, they both were on the way
To make large fortunes. Richard Middleton
Went early out to India : Bernard had

His office-desk in London, where he worked
With assiduity and energy.
They both were merchants : but the ventures of
The one were made in the flush Orient ;
The traffic of the other chiefly lay
In the West Indies, where plantations large,
With luscious rums and sugars brought in cash.
Both were employed in making money ; one,
Abroad, at times acquiring sudden sums
Of large amount ; the other, slow and sure,
Amassing solid wealth. Dick Middleton
Had married at eighteen, and taken his
Young wife to India with him when he went :
But Bernard Thorpe remained a bachelor.
His residence was good, substantial ; one
Of those old roomy gloomy mansions in
The neighborhood of Bedford Square, which once
Found favor with rich city men ; *warm*, like
Themselves, 'tis true, but wholly ugly and
Unstylish, unattractive, void of grace
Or cheerfulness. In this dull dwelling he
Contented lived, his thoughts absorbed in gain, —
Not sordid gain, but gain that should exalt
Him to the style of merchant-prince, the rank

Sir Thomas Gresham held with such renown.
Respectable in all, he had a most
Respectable old housekeeper, who once
Had been his mother's, and who knew him from
A boy. She almost stood him in the place
Of mother now, so motherly and good
Was Mistress Wilson in her care of her
Young master.

By the Indian mail one year
A letter came to Bernard Thorpe that gave
Him much delight. It told him that he might
Expect his old school friend, Dick Middleton,
In England shortly ; said the writer knew
That Bernard Thorpe would gladly hear of his
Return, and welcome him to English ground
Again ; " although (so ran the letter) " I
Am only coming on a visit, and
Shall soon go back to India, where a man
May make a heap of guineas in a day.
There, there's the place for minting money, my
Dear friend : I almost wish the East and not
The West had been your chosen mart, old boy.
But I have something now in view that will,
Or I am very much mistaken, prove

A field between them — that's neither here
Nor there (I don't intend a pun) — which must
Bring in enormous profits, and turn out
A perfect El Dorado, — truer far
Than that Sir Walter Raleigh went to find.
But more of this, friend, when we meet ; which will
Be soon I hope. Yours, ever faithfully,
DICK MIDDLETON."

When he arrived, his friend
Insisted he should come to him at once : —
" You must, Dick," Bernard said ; " you must indulge
My wish, and make my house your home while you
Remain in England." " But my stay will be
But short," said Richard, " and it's scarce worth while
To put you out for such a little time."
" The less time you can give, the more I need
To make the most of it. Come, Dick, you must
Consent." " Oh, if I must, I must," said Dick ;
" But mistress What's-her-name, your housekeeper,
Will wish me farther, with my truant ways
Of darting in and out, at all odd hours ;
Of keeping dinner waiting ; being out
When I should be at home, and being in
When she'd be glad to have my room instead

Of company, as the saying goes.
I know I am unpunctual, terribly
Irregular, and unmethodical :
My wife has often told me so ; though she
Is gentlest of the gentle, and will bear
From me, ay, almost any thing. But how
Can I expect your housekeeper to bear" —
"My housekeeper will bear whatever I
Think fit and pleasant," answered Bernard with
A smile ; "and your consenting to my wish
Is fit and pleasant both : so it's agreed."
The friends enjoyed their time together much.
While Richard Middleton was staying there
He entered headlong into the grand scheme
That he had mentioned in his letter to
His friend ; though Bernard Thorpe did all he could
To try dissuade the eager Richard from
A too rash entrance into this vast field
Of speculation, that presented such
Alluring prospect and large promise of
Returns. "An interest of cent-per-cent
Dimensions always serves to startle me
From joining in a project," Bernard said ;
"Lest it should prove a bubble some fine day,

And burst, with empty nothingness for the
Investors, shareholders, and all concerned.
No, no ; I always rather trust to small,
Sure gains, than to a dazzling possible
Result of magnitude immense ; for large
Percentage certainly implies large risk."

"Ay, Bernard," smiled his friend ; "you always were,
You know, a something of a plodder ; liked
To take the cautious, prudent course : while I
Loved rapid pace, excitement ; all the rush,
The speed, the impetus, the triumph of
A swift arrival at my goal, to find
Myself the prize-crowned conqueror." "Beware
Lest you the racer's fate experience,
Of check, impediment, or being thrown,"
Returned the other in a graver tone ;
"Consider, Dick, ere yet it be too late."

"It is too late already, if you call
'Too late' my being early to secure
A thumping slice of this good thing, a lot,
A lion's share of shares, for next to naught,
For a mere song, in fact ; they let me have
This first advantage, since 'twas I that first
Originated and promoted the

Affair. It really is a splendid thing.
Moreover they have made me treasurer,
And one of the directors. I assure
You, Bernard, it is sure to do ; it must,
It shall, it will ; I'm certain that it will.
I'll give you as a toast to-day — and drink
It you will not refuse, I know — ‘ Success
To Richard Middleton’s new scheme, and may
It bring him all the luck and cash that he
Expects ! ’ And that is not a little, I
Can tell you, Master Bernard, dear old boy ! ”
In higher spirits went on Dick, until
One day he came home late to dinner, and
Went up at once to his own room to dress.
A quarter of an hour elapsed — and then
Another — and again a third ; but still
No Dick appeared. Then Bernard rang the bell,
And asked if Mr. Middleton had yet
Come in. “ Dear, yes, sir, to be sure,
A good half-hour ago,” was the reply ;
“ But p'rhaps he don't feel quite the thing,” said Price,
The old gray-headed butler, in a tone
Of half mysterious, half fatherly
Concern ; for Dick's good-natured lively ways

And lavish pay for service done had gained
Him favor in the household. Price's tone
Drew notice from his master. "What is it
You mean?" said he; "is Mr. Middleton
Not well?" "I don't exactly know, sir; but
He seemed to me to look quite queer, — so white,
So drawn, so strange, somehow." "I'll go and see
To it myself," said Bernard; and he ran
Upstairs to see his friend. On opening
The door he saw Dick sitting with his face
Deep buried in his hands; complete despair
Marked sunken head, distracted attitude;
While on the table lay an open case
Of travelling pistols, close within his reach.
His friend advanced with noiseless step and laid
A gentle hand upon the shoulder of
The stricken man: "Dick, what is this?" he said
With voice as tender as a woman's; "tell
Me what has chanced." "A blow, a heavy blow;
It struck me on the head, I fancy; it
Affects my head, I think; but it will
Pass away; 'tis nothing, I dare say; leave
Me, Bernard; I will try to get some sleep;
I only feel a little stunned: the blow

Was hard." He tried to turn it off, and make
It seem he'd met with some street accident.
"Dick, tell me truly what has happened," said
His friend. Then Dick burst forth in torrent wild
Of words: "Impending ruin, utter loss,
Destruction! Worse than money loss, the loss
Of honor, credit, reputation; worse,
Far worse! I ne'er can raise my head again!
Best die at once, and end it all!" His eyes
An instant turned to where the pistols lay
Upon the table. Bernard closed the case,
And put it in his pocket. "Dick," he said,
"Be calm, be rational; come, be yourself,
Your bright and hopeful self; you always were
A hopeful chap, you know — too sanguine, p'rhaps —
But now 'tis best encourage hope. Come, let's
Consider how all this may be repaired,
Averted; think of ways and means; devise
Some mode of putting off the evil day.
This scheme, of course, has failed; I feared it would;
It is so, is it not?" "It is," said Dick;
"Dolt, blockhead that I was, to be so rash,
So credulous!" "Is there no help? No chance
Of staving off the crash?" asked Bernard. "None,

“None, none!” said Dick. “Unless I find the means
To raise before to-morrow noon a sum
Of fabulous amount, I’m beggared, and —
Still deeper misery — dishonored, lost,
Undone ; for never after can I hope
To rise, recover ground, make one more strong
Attempt to try my fate with fortune, and
Retrieve the past by ardent, strenuous
Endeavor. Bankrupt, creditless, no chance
Remains for me in life ; and life I care
Not for, I will not have.” “Dick, promise me
That you will be a man, commit no act
Of folly, — worse than folly, wickedness, —
Do nothing desperate, and I in turn
Will promise to think over this, and see
What can be done before to-morrow noon.
And now cheer up, my dear old boy, and come
With me downstairs : we’ll have a glass of good
Old Burgundy shall warm our hearts, and may —
Who knows? — inspire me with the efiest way
To get you out of difficulty, and
To set you on your legs of mercantile
Stability again. Some food and wine
Will do you good. The dinner — no, I will

Not call it so — the supper has been kept
By us so long uneaten, that poor Price,
And mistress cook, and mistress housekeeper,
Are out of patience, sure, by this time." Thus
Did Bernard rattle on, that Dick might not
Relapse into his moody thought and black
Despair : the two men seemed, as they sat there
At table, to have changed respectively
Their characters : Dick, downcast, sad, and mute,
While Bernard was all brightness, passed the wine,
And strove to keep his friend in spirits, cheer, and hope.
When finished was the meal, and servants were
Withdrawn, the two fell into graver talk,
And Bernard made himself acquainted with
The full particulars of Richard's case,
The master of its every detailed fact.
Then bidding Dick good night, and charging him
To keep good heart, his friend retired to bed.
But not to sleep : he lay awake in thought
And earnest question with himself, how he
Might rescue Richard, yet escape without
The total wreck of his own fortunes ; for
The sum required was one that almost would
Demand his all, and leave him nearly stripped,

Comparatively penniless, reduced,
Restricted to the scantiest of means
For keeping still his honored calling as
A merchant. But at length he firm made up
His mind: "I cannot let old Dick be lost
For want of my assistance, come what may!
He saved my life at school once, in his own
Impetuous and headlong way, without
Regard to consequence or danger to
Himself: just as he now is, he was then;
A thoughtless, generous chap, resolved to win
Whate'er he sought at one bold dash, be it
The life of his school chum, or be it wealth
And eminence. Old Dick must not be lost,
If any sacrifice of mine can save
Him now. It is but going back to where
I was, beginning life anew. I'll start
Afresh with vigor and good will. I am
Not thirty yet: there's time enough to make
My fortune still." Next day he told his friend
Of what he had resolved upon. Dick made
Remonstrance; said he could not think of such
A noble sacrifice on Bernard's part;
That he could not accept a loan so large,

So ruinously large ; but when he found
That Bernard still persisted and remained
Unmoved, Dick wavered, then began to yield,
And lent an ear to Bernard's arguments : —
“Remember I, a bachelor,” said Thorpe,
“Can better far afford to be a poor
And struggling man than you, a husband and
A father, can afford to be without
A shilling. Think a moment of your wife
And child, and then I know you'll see the force
Of what I say.” “Besides,” said Dick, “although
This heavy loan will leave you straitened for
A period, 'twill be but for a time ;
Since once I am again in India, my
Resources there will soon enable me
To send you a remittance ; such a sum
As amply will suffice to set you well
Afloat again, till I can forward more
And more, until the whole be gratefully
Repaid.” And thus it was agreed. By noon
Next day the fate of Richard Middleton
Was saved, the fate of Bernard Thorpe was sealed :
The one was free, the other bound, — bound hand
And foot to recommencement of his first

Dull drudgery in early days, when he,
As office-clerk, began the mercantile
Career, day-dreaming of Dick Whittington,
His humble origin and glorious end.
The time arrived for parting, and the two
Took leave. "God bless you, dear old boy! good-by!
When once I'm over there, I'll forward the
Remittance, never fear! Expect it soon,
Dear Bernard, generous friend!" And Dick set sail.

Thus bare, thus cramped and maimed,
A crippled man in capital and funds,
Stout-hearted Bernard set to work to lay
Again the first stone of his edifice,
His building up a fortune regal in
Its vastness. He began by practising
The strictest prudence and economy,
Retrenched his personal expenses to
The merest need; wore plainest garments; took
No recreation save his books and walks;
Reduced his household; lived on simplest fare;
But dwelt in the same roomy gloomy house,
For three good reasons; one, because he there
Lived free of rent, since he had bought it for
His own when he was rich; the second was,

Because it looked substantial, solid, like
The dwelling of a well-established man ;
The third, because to change it for a less
Expensive one would challenge notice and
Bespeak reverse and smaller means : for he
Endeavored always to preserve the look
Of being still as able as before
To meet all exigencies and sustain
The business in previous magnitude.
Its old repute, its long-established name,
Its steady, firmly grounded credit, and
Repute for punctuality and prompt
Fulfilment of trade orders, constant in
Its industry, activity for years,
While Bernard's father was alive, and when
The son succeeded him to be its head,
Gave Bernard power to stem the tide
Of difficulty threatening to whelm
Him in its flood : and still he toiled and toiled,
And waited, waited, ever patiently,
In expectation of the promised large
Remittance coming from abroad, that might
Redeem Dick's solemn pledge, as well as shield
Himself from pressing calls, and urgent need

To be prepared against ensuing chance
Or imminent demand.

But time went on ;
And still no news from India, none from Dick.
The lines increased on Bernard's knitted brow ;
The crows of care began to set their feet
With deep indent about his wistful eyes ;
His cheek grew haggard, wan, with that sad look
Is seen in faces early aged and worn
By carking, pondering anxiety ;
By absent-minded longing for some one
Intensely wished occurrence ; by a dull
Persistent dwelling on a single strong
Desire, to the exclusion of all else
That's healthful, cheerful, hopeful for a man
To think upon. Yet Bernard was still young,
And hardly yet had reached the prime of life ;
The more, then, was it sorrowful to mark
The signs of that impending oldness in
His face and its expression, with the bend
Of his brown head ere it was gray, and stoop
Of limbs that had not shrunk, but still possessed
The firmness, suppleness, alertness of
Their youth. He was a personable man,

Of figure fine and tall, with countenance
Refined, a forehead bland and thoughtful, eyes
That glowed with generous fire, or softened with
Benignity, and smile of sweetness most
Ineffable : but all these comely points
Were clouded by his growing care, and gnaw
Of ever biting keen solicitude.

At last an Indian mail came in that brought
The long expected letter, which ran thus :—
“ Dear Friend, — Alas for the remittance that
I promised and I fully thought to send !
I’ve staked my last and lost : I thought to make
One final stroke of fortune would repay
You all, and more than all : but no, I’m ruined ;
Ruined past redemption, past recall.
I send you now, in lieu of the once hoped
Remittance, all that now is left to me, —
My beggared orphan child ; for orphan soon
I feel she’ll be : her mother is no more ;
Myself am struck to earth, am dying fast :
This blow has killed me with the bitter thought
Of my poor girl thus left, and you unpaid ;
I send her to you, Bernard, in my last
Extremity : a charge instead of payment :

And yet I know you will take care of her ;
For have you not been always good to me ?
Forbearing ? Generous ? A more than friend ?
Be kind to her, be kind to my poor Grace,
If only for the sake of bygone times,
When I was your old school-fellow and chum,
DICK MIDDLETON."

The girl arrived : a slim
Slight girl, scarce entered on her teens ; a shy
And timid creature, with large eyes that shrank
From gaze, yet seemed to fill her face, so out
They stood above her pale, wan, wasted cheeks :
A girl forlorn and unattractive she
Appeared to Bernard Thorpe, as he at once
Delivered her to Wilson's care, and gave
His housekeeper the order to attend
To all was needful for Miss Middleton.
"An unformed girl, an awkward unformed girl ;"
Was Bernard's muttered thought, as she withdrew ;
" 'A charge instead of payment,' were the words
Her father used, and true enough they are :
A charge indeed ! an onerous charge ! a charge
The more for me to bear beyond what I
Have had to bear : a charge entailing more

Expense and outlay in the place of the
Remittance promised, my own sum returned,
Repaid : that sum so long expected, long
Relied on, long and ardently desired !
That sum which would have helped to make me all
I thought to be, — a wealthy man, a man
Respected as a reigning potentate
Among his fellow-merchants, one who might
Have raised high merchanthood 'e'en higher yet.
What now is left me? To remain for years
A struggling man, an ever-struggling man !
But, patience, Bernard Thorpe, be patient still !
With patience, courage, persevering work,
You yet may win the goal you've set your heart
Upon. Till now you have relied on one
Whose word you took : henceforth rely on none
But God and your own self ; be brave, be calm,
Be firm and constant to your promised end ! ”
That end he more than ever held in view,
Pursued, and still unflinchingly resolved.
To gain : he labored at his desk by night
As well as day ; he spared nor toil, nor thought,
Nor hand, nor brain : all day he spent in the
Small pent-up city office, hard at work ;

The evening he gave himself for brief
Enjoyment of his dinner and his glass
Of wine ; but long into the night he wrote,
And looked into his ledgers, cash-accounts,
His long ruled pages bound in calf, and all
The rest of those important "books that are
No books," according to the author-clerk
Of London's venerable India-house,
Dear Elia, ever-honored writer-friend,
Sweet-hearted, witty, good and great Charles Lamb.
The time allowed by Bernard Thorpe for rest,
Repose of mind as well as hand, was when
Just once in the whole four-and-twenty hours,
He saw the young girl, Grace, who had been sent
So solemnly to his own guardianship
And care. Her diffidence, her shyness, her
Timidity, would fain have kept her from
What she imagined might be taken as
Intrusion ; but good Mistress Wilson would
Not hear of Grace's dining anywhere
But with the master of the house ; and at
The proper dinner-hour of set and state
Repast for the chief meal of every day,
She had her ready dressed and ready to

Go down into the dining-room, against
The well-known knock was heard, that she might there
Be seated to receive the merchant, when,
Returning home, he ought to find and to
Be met with welcome, was the sage and kind
Assertion of the formal thoughtful dame : —
“For you must know, my dear,” she said, “that my
Young master has lived much too much alone,
In my opinion ; and he would be all
The better for a little company ;
Ay, even company of one so mere
A girl as you are, dear, is cheerfuller
Than dining by himself : so you must go.”
Grace always went ; was punctual to the time ;
And sat beside the fire, its bright red blaze
Reflected dancingly, and lighting up
With starry sparkles the small locket and
The jet upon her mourning frock ; and so
Brought into fuller, stronger contrast the
Pale face and large dark eyes that spoke in dumb
But plainly written characters the tale
Of early saddened girlhood. There she sat
In deepest thought, her loosely folded hands
Across her lap, her eyes fixed dreamily

Upon the coals, in which she seemed to see
Strange pictures of the past old Indian life,
Until came Bernard's knock, to wake her with
A start from out her musing trance, and bring
Her back to present life with all its yet
More strange surroundings, as it seemed to her.
When he came in, she used to quick look up
And see if in his face were aught amiss,
Of coming change or fresh anxiety ;
Then rose, and silently — as was her wont —
Drew forward his arm-chair a little, as
Presenting it, reminding him 'twas there
Beside the fire ; and pointed to the rug
Where lay his slippers, warming, ready to
Put on at once, ere he went up to dress
More leisurely before they dined. All these
Attentions, paid with utmost quietness,
As quietly were taken by the man
To whom they were so mutely offered ; for
At most times Bernard was so absent, so
Immersed in calculations and accounts,
He rarely noticed what was passing. His
Abstraction lessened somewhat as the meal
Went on ; and by the time dessert was placed

Upon the table, he became more free
Of speech, more genial, more inclined to chat
With Grace. She had been in the house some weeks,
When once he said, while eating walnuts peeled
By her, and put upon his plate with salt,
In silence : " I've remembered, child, that I
Ought long ere this to have bethought me of
A school ; for I suppose you should be sent
To school." He gave a sort of little sigh,
As he said this, in thinking of the time
That he must give to choosing some good school ;
Some school well recommended, and well known
To be a good one. " If you please," said Grace,
With her large eyes raised suddenly to his,
" I would much rather not be sent to school ;
My mother used to tell me that she did
Not like the thought of school for me. But if
I'm troublesome or wrong in saying I
Object, or telling you my mother's strong
Objection, I will go to school." " No need,
No need," said Bernard ; " we can think of some
Still better mode of education ; for
Of course you must be educated, child, —
Now, mustn't you ? " " My mother taught me much,"

Said Grace ; “ from quite a little, little girl
She used to teach me all she knew, and take
Great pains with me ; but I don’t know ; perhaps
I ought to learn some more. Do you think so ? ”
“ I hardly know, indeed, myself,” said he,
With puzzled look ; “ I know so little what
Is reckoned right for a young lady’s due
And proper training ; but, if not a school,
A governess might be engaged for you,
Or teachers, masters, could come here at hours
Appointed, certain days.” “ A governess
Would want a salary, and cost a great,
Great deal ; while Mistress Wilson takes good care
Of me, and teaches me to sew and stitch,
And lets me watch her make preserves and jams,
With many other things it’s well to learn ;
And then there are the books upon the shelves
In your small study, that she said I might
Go into while you are away — you do
Not mind it, do you ? — and from these I pick
Out several I like to look at and
To read.” “ You do ? ” asked Bernard, much amused
At Grace’s quaintly stated plan for her
Home schooling ; “ but I should have thought those
books

You speak of much too dry to please the taste
Of a young girl." "In one of them," said Grace,
"I found a number of most curious prints,
That entertain me always ; queer monkeys,
Odd birds, strange places, heads of ancient men
And women, monstrous fish and insects, all
Of which I want to know about, and so
I read the pages near, and like that book
Beyond the rest." "The Cyclopædia, eh?"
Said Bernard, with a smile that lighted up
His face, and long had been a stranger there ;
 " Well, well, your choice is rather different
From what the usual run of damsels of
Your age prefer ; but you are not among
'The usual run ' of girls ; and you know best,
Of course, what interests and pleases you."
"Not only pleases me, but teaches me,"
Said Grace, a little timidly, afraid
That Bernard's manner might imply he thought
She cared for nothing more than pastime in
Her looking through his books ; "I learn while I
Am turning over all those leaves, and if
I do not learn enough, you can engage —
But later on — some masters for me, if

You please." "Ay, very well," said Bernard, much
Relieved to find the matter settled for
The present, turning as he spoke to where
A writing-table always stood, that he
Might go at once to work when food and rest
Were taken. Grace was also glad to have
Reprieve : her haunting dread of adding to
The merchant's outlay, when she knew his means
Had been so straitened by that heavy loan,
Of being one more burden among those
Her father's act had laid on him to bear,
Inspired her with a constant wish to save
Him all expense, to spare in all she could,
To try and aid him by economy,
By active, helpful, frugal ways at home,
And by avoiding for herself whate'er
Cost money. Grace was thoughtful much beyond
Her years : her mother delicate, she had
Been nurse, sick-cook, and comforter to her ;
Her father, thoughtless, lavish, careless, but
Most fond of wife and child, had been of both
The idle and the thought-for : thus it came
That, from her earliest childhood, Grace had been
Accustomed by her parents to be made

Their little confidant in all their joys
And griefs, their pleasures and their pains, their brief
Good fortune, and their frequent intervals
Of narrowed income ; causing her to have
Reflection, patience, prudence, foresight, quick
Perception, judgment, seldom seen in girls
Of age so tender.

One among the few
Small luxuries that Bernard still allowed
Himself at table, after his resolve
To banish superfluities, was choice
Though spare dessert, and strong black coffee formed,
To him, its chief enjoyment. This he liked
Made carefully, prepared with duest eye
To preservation of its exquisite
Aroma. On a certain evening
He raised his coffee-cup, and sipped, and sipped,
With extra relish of its grateful scent
And flavor, till at length he asked : " Who made
This coffee ? Mistress Wilson, I suppose,
As usual ? Yet it seems to me she has
Surpassed herself. But was it she ? I ought
To be a judge of coffee, and I think
I could be sure that this was made by some

New hand. Who was it, Susan?" "It was made To-day, sir, by Miss Middleton," said the Neat waiting-maid who served at table now In place of Price, the butler, sent away When Bernard had reduced his household. "I Was sure I could not be mistaken; it's Delicious; quite a different, and still More delicate essential taste." He looked At Grace. Her usual paleness now had changed To scarlet. "Mistress Wilson let me try," She said, in answer to his look; "I had So often begged her leave to make it once, Because I wished to see if you would like The way I used to make it when I was In India, for my mother, who was fond Of coffee; and she always liked it made By me." "I do not wonder; so should I," Said Bernard, smilingly. "Would you?" answered Grace, Delightedly. "Then might I make it for You every day, — at breakfast time as well As dinner?" "Certainly; but breakfast time Is early, and requires you to be up At a still earlier time, if you would make The coffee ready for my breakfasting,

Before I leave this house for office hours
And city business." "I'm always up
A good long while before your breakfast, and
I will be sure to have the coffee made
In time," she said. And so it was ; and Grace
Was there to pour it out for him. Till then
She had not liked to join him at that meal,
Lest he, in hurry to be off, should find
Her in the way ; but ever after, she
Took courage, and both breakfasted and dined
With him.

Not only from the picture-book,
That drew a smile from Bernard, did she strive
To gather knowledge, but with diligent
Attention she read through most carefully
The books he had thought "dry" for her, which in
The study she had found ; they were a small
But well chosen collection, mostly works
Of science, travel, and biography.
They aided her to form her mind and fill
It with a store of information, good,
Available, and solid ; useful, fit
To make her practical and sensible.
She was already so, by nature and

By circumstance ; her course of reading now
But tending to confirm her previous bent.
Another source of intellectual aid
She had. There came sometimes at after hours
To Bernard's dwelling-house, on messages
Of urgency, a young clerk from the house
Of business in the City, who was sent
Because he was a favorite of his,
A steady worker and intelligent.
This Henry Frankland worshipped Bernard ; but
With certain awe and reverence inspired
By former patronage bestowed upon
Himself and family, and by the grave
Reserve, with aspect dignified, that were
The merchant's, even from his very youth.
When Henry Frankland brought these messages
It generally was when Bernard sat
Enjoying his dessert ; but even that
Gave way at once to business ; and he
Went straight to where his writing-table stood,
And wrote whatever letter, answer, or
Directions wanted sending back for next
Day's early morning post, first pointing to
The dining-table, saying, hurriedly

But kindly : " Frankland, help yourself to wine
And fruit, or coffee, while I write this line."
The "line" would often take an hour or two
To write, as detail after detail would
Suggest itself to Bernard's mind for each
Minute and accurate instruction : thus
It came that Frankland stayed, while Grace performed
The hospitable duties, offering
The cates to him, instead of letting him
Attend upon himself ; and often tea
Was served ere Bernard had completed all
He had to write. The first time Grace poured out
A cup and offered it to Frankland, he,
In tone subdued that might not interrupt
The merchant as he wrote, said : " Shall I not
Take some to Mr. Thorpe? Will he not take
Some tea?" " No," was Grace's low reply ; " he
But seldom drinks it till it's cold, and does
Not like to be disturbed when writing ; he
Will come himself for some, if later on
He care to have any ; 'tis understood
Between us ; so I never offer tea
To him, but let it wait his pleasure." And
Much low talk like this was held by Grace

And Frankland, then and afterwards while he
Awaited Bernard's written orders, and
She brought her needlework, to give her hands
Employment as she listened. For 'twas he
That chiefly talked : habitually staid
And sparing of her speech, Grace much preferred
Remaining silent, when the clerk would tell
Her what he thought might serve to entertain
The lonely quiet girl thus living set
Apart from all society, from all
Communion and companionship with those
Of her own age. Till, by degrees, Grace learned
To look for evenings when most probably
Young Frankland might arrive with City-sent
Despatches for the merchant ; since she then
Heard something of the outer world, and, what
More interested her, some touches of
That inner world wherein she dwelt and close
Concentred all her thoughts. She heard from him
Of Bernard's goodness to himself and all
He dearly loved, when they in penury
Were steeped, and, but for what the merchant did
On their behalf, would probably have sunk
O'erwhelmed : she heard from Frankland of the large

Benevolence, the charity, the bland
Mild kindness that marked the merchant's mode
Of giving ear to sufferers ; e'en when
He could not give them aid in money, from
His own less ample means, he furnished them
With letters to his wealthier friends, and took
Best pains to help them on their way to earn
An independence for themselves. Besides
These narratives, Grace gleaned from the young clerk
Some knowledge that she wanted, for the clear
And better comprehension of a branch
Of information she had made her more
Espécial care to cull from those "dry" books
She studied ; it was commerce, traffic, trade
In mercantile and international
Regard, she strove to understand ; and to
Become acquainted with their various
Requirements, — skill in book-keeping, and in
Arithmetic, in calculations of
Percentage, annual and compound rates
Of interest, in home and foreign goods,
In exports, imports, markets, prices, and
The rest of those essential points for one
Who wished to be proficient, and might be

Efficient, as a merchant's helping hand.
She once heard Bernard say that his young clerk
Was versed in business particulars,
And first-rate as accountant ; so she asked
Of Frankland help in certain points that still
Perplexed her, and of which she could not quite
Yet solve the mystery from what she read.
Sometimes, when Grace's difficulties of
Commercial study were adjusted, the
Young clerk would turn to other subjects ; and,
As gradually more and more at ease
Became this murmured talk, he would confide
To Grace some items of his personal
Affairs ; as where his parents lived, and how
He had an only sister, who with them
Made home a paradise of peace and joy
And comfort to him ; ne'ertheless, how he
Looked forward, some fine day, to make his home
A still more happy one, by bringing there
As wife a certain Lucy Mildmay, whom
He loved and hoped to wed, when he should earn
Sufficient income to support them all.
Grace took great interest in this the first
Love-story that her girlish life had known ;

She felt a pride in being told so young
Its secret, and she wished it all success
With earnestness and warmth. It made a theme
Of kindly social thought for her amid
The solitary course her youth maintained.
And yet, though solitary, it was far
From dull to her. She took delight in all
She did ; and worked with zest at each pursuit
With which she filled her time, in hope to make
Her education what it should be, while
Still keeping Bernard free from the expense
Of schooling, governess, or masters. One
Expense there was she could not spare him from ;
For he himself insisted that she should
Have an allowance quarterly, to spend
As best she chose, for clothes, for trifles, such
As all young ladies need, he had affirmed,
And would not hear of any other plan.
He told his housekeeper that Grace had showed
Such great discretion, for so young a girl,
In all she said about her learning from
The books already in the house, he felt
Assured she might be trusted to control
Her own expenditure, and thought it best

Young people should be early used to lay
Out money for themselves, and learn betimes
To regulate their income with a true
And just economy. "I think so too,"
The dame had answered: "and of all
Young ladies that I ever saw, Miss Grace
Is, sure, the cleverest at making and
Arranging dresses, keeping them so neat and nice,
So spick and span, they look bran new,
Though now they're getting rather worn, it must
Be owned; but then they're still those same black frocks
She brought with her from India, — poor dear thing!
"Then let her get some others," answered he,
And so the subject of allowance ceased;
For Grace deferred to Bernard's wish in this
As in all else. Her stipend once begun,
Among the first large purchases she made
Was no less than a cottage-piano, that
She might keep up her music, taught her by
Her mother, which she thought she could make means
Of earning, if need were, some day; and so
She practised hard in her own room;
She also worked at drawing, sketching, as
She had much aptitude for these,

And fancied they, too, might be useful, if
She had to earn ; for Grace was constant to
Her character, — prudent, provident, and wise.

Two years slipped by, with almost unperceived
Transition, since she had been dwelling in
The merchant's house ; when, after dinner, once,
As Bernard sat engrossed with papers at
His writing-table, Grace heard drop some words
Of muttered worry from his lips : “ How's this ?
How's this ? To-night it seems as if I could
Not reckon. Pshaw ! a simple sum like this !
Let's see, let's see ; the interest upon
Eleven hundred pounds, at six per cent,
For twenty-seven years, would bring, — how much ? ”
He looked up for an instant, as in doubt,
When Grace said softly, scarce above her breath : —
“ One thousand, seven hundred, eighty-two,
I think, sir, is it not ? ” A cannon-shot
Could hardly more have startled Bernard than
This answer from a girl of Grace's age.
He looked at her and laughed outright, a good
Loud hearty laugh, a laugh that had not come
From him for years. “ Why, child ! ” he said, —
“ How long have you been mistress of accounts ?

How long is it that you can tell about
A capital with interest, and such
Hard-sounding mercantile up-reckonings?"

Grace blushed bright crimson, — partly shame to be
Found out in what she secretly had learned,
And partly with delight at Bernard's laugh ;
For never had she heard him laugh, — not once,
Since she had known him : and the consciousness
Of how his gravity was caused had oft
Depressed her heart, which now leapt up at sound
So new, so welcome. Through her blushes bright
Her eyes were dancing ; and as Bernard looked
At that young face, so usually pale,
But now one glow of color, vividness,
And animation, wondered how he could
Have ever thought her "unattractive."

"You do not answer me," still laughing, he
Continued : "tell me how it is that you
Have come to be a good accountant? Why
I might engage you as a clerk, if your
Accomplishment be what it seems." "I ask
No better," Grace replied ; "I'll be your clerk
At home, if you will have me. You can try
My services ; and if they please, they're at

Your service, sir." She spoke with playfulness,
Inspired by pleasure at his laugh. "But yet
You have not told me how it is you gained
Your clerkly knowledge?" Bernard said. "I learned
Much from your books; and what I could not quite
Make out from them, I asked your clerk to tell
Me,—to explain more clearly, fully. He
Had patience, and his explanations I
Could always understand." "My clerk? What do
You mean? What clerk?" "The clerk that sometimes
comes

With messages to you. I heard you call
Him Frankland, did I not?" "Oh, ay, of course,
Young Frankland; yes, he is an excellent
Accountant; one well able to instruct
You in the rudiments and science of
Our noble mercantile pursuit: but still"—
Here Bernard stopped, and said no more; he turned
To look again into his papers, while
Grace plied her needle, happy in the thought
Of Bernard's pleasant look and hearty laugh.
And, after that, he often gladly used
The clerkly knowledge and the clerkly hand
Of Grace, in helping him to calculate

And write : he found her thoroughly well versed,
Most competent, and ever happiest
When she was busy helping him.

Thus, two years more passed by unmarked, until
One day an illness came to Grace : 'twas slight
At first ; but soon became much worse, and then
Proved fever ; fever that for long kept her
A prisoner upstairs, nursed carefully
And tenderly by good kind motherly
Old Mistress Wilson, who from earliest
Had taken Grace to her affection, loved
Her like a daughter ; calling her " My dear "
When speaking to herself, though always spoke
Of her to Bernard as " Miss Grace," and to
All others as " Miss Middleton," with true
Old-fashioned properness of due and right
Distinction. Grace's illness was a time
Of grief to all, for all had learned to love
The gentle girl, so quaintly self-possessed,
Yet modest, quiet, mild, in all her ways :
But most the merchant felt the time
While Grace was ill a period of grief
And misery ; a want, a vacancy,
A blank, a loss, seemed fallen on his life ;

At breakfast how he missed the light quick step,
So noiseless yet alert, that came to bring
The coffee freshly made ; the sweet young face,
So cheerful, placid, bright, that bade him a
“ Good-morning,” e’en before she spoke, and gave
Him blithe “ Good-by ” when he departed for
The city ; but when most he missed her was
Returning home for dinner ; missed the rest,
The peacefulness, the soft repose yet cheer
Of Grace’s presence ; all the sympathy,
The welcome, that her look, her tone, expressed
Without the need of words to say how much
His home-return delighted her. Instead,
The news of, “ Not much better, sir, to-day,”
From Susan, with her former briskness now
Subdued to stillness ; then the silence of
The solitary meal, the sighs that oft
Broke from him as he ate, in lieu of that
Gay interchange of chat, which, since he had
Become less absent-minded, she less shy
And timid, passed between them while they dined.

At length, however, came an evening
When Susan met him with a brisker face
And voice : “ Oh, please, sir, Mistress Wilson bade

Me give her duty and to say that if
You'd like to come upstairs, sir, after you've
Had dinner, she believes it wouldn't hurt
Miss Middleton to see you, and to have
A little chat for half an hour, as she's
A good deal better, sir, to-day." He made
An end of dinner very quickly, and
He ran upstairs with lighter step than had
Been his for days and days. He found Grace in
A large arm-chair, propped up by pillows ; but
With beaming eyes, that shone like stars above
Her hectic-flushed thin cheek, as he approached.
The wavy chestnut hair hung loosely down
Upon the muslin wrapper that took place
Of those plain sober grays she wore when well ;
Her arms fell languidly on either side,
And wasted hand — when once it had been held
Out greetingly to him — dropped feebly too.
The shock of seeing her so changed, so weak,
Held Bernard silent, motionless ; while she
Said little, in the joy of seeing him.
"We're getting nicely on, sir, now," remarked
Dame Wilson, cheerfully ; "we have been ill,
Ay, very ill ; but we are coming round,

I'm glad to say, and hope soon to be well,
Quite well, and looking bonnily again."
"We're looking 'bonnily' already, as
It seems to me," said Bernard, trying to
Speak cheerily in turn. "These rosy cheeks
Tell hopefully of coming health, I trust ;
And, Grace, you've grown quite tall in this short time."
"Ay, always during fever we grow fast,"
Said Wilson, with sententious primness ; "tall
And slender, — just a shade too slender, sir,
Máyhaps, at present ; but with feeding up
And care we shall grow plump, and strong, and stout,
All in good time." "Nay, 'stout' we'll leave to you,
Good Wilson," Bernard smiling said. "I meant,
When I said 'stout,' " said Wilson, laughing at
Her own full cheeks and double chin, "I meant,
Of course, robust and hearty ; and I hope
It won't be long before Miss Grace is that ;
For though she always was a slip, a mite,
Yet wonderfully healthy, active in
The house, she always was, that must be said.
See what a pretty place she's made of her
Own sitting-room ; it's all her doing, all
Her planning and contriving ; and it cost

So little too, — ay, there's the beauty, — cost
A merest nothing ; for she worked at it
Herself, and made the curtains, carpet, with
Her clever little fingers, bless her ; sewed
Away as if she got her living by
Her needle ; stitched the seams, the hems, as though
She liked tough work ; and then, by way of rest,
Embroidered all these cushions, soft low chairs
And footstools ; drew these pictures that are hung
Around the walls, and ” — “ Stay, you must not thus
Tell tales, nurse, out of school,” said laughing Grace ;
“ How you are running on.” “ My dear, I do
So just o' purpose, making talk for you
And master, that my patient mayn't be made
To talk too much herself, the first time she
Receives a visit.” “ ‘ Patient,’ nurse? It
Is he that is the ‘ patient ’ now, I think,
If you run on at such a rate.” “ No one
Can say that I am given much to talk,”
Said Wilson ; “ goodness knows, I only talk
To keep you lively and amused, my dear,
When you seem willing to enjoy a chat
Sometimes while you are sewing at your work.”
“ Suppose I say ‘ Good-night,’ ” said Bernard ; “ if

Allowed to come, I must not make my stay
Too long, lest nurse should scold, and tell me that
Our invalid exerts herself too much.
If I behave with due discretion now,
I may, I hope, be promised I shall come
To-morrow. Good-night, Grace! God bless you, Grace!"
As Bernard went downstairs he thought of his
Last word. He had repeated "Grace" instead
Of saying to her "child," as formerly:
But now he felt he could not call her "child;"
He felt, while he was with her, that she had
Become no longer like a child, a girl,
A little creature sent to him for home,
Protection, care, and guidance; but a young
And beautiful and sentient being, with
A nature righteous, spirit wise and good,
Well able to conduct itself by pure
Instinctive innocence of impulse and
Perception: no, — no child; but a young girl
Irradiated, hallowed, by the bloom
Of early womanhood that touched her with
A saint-like glory, as she lay back there,
So smiling, and so gentle, and so faint, —
More helpless than before, and yet more clad

In spiritual strength, exalted, strong
To help herself and others throughout life,
If life were granted her. As Bernard's thought
Arrived at this last clause, he inwardly
Ejaculated: "God of mercy! had
She died, had she been taken from me, what
Would life have now become to me? A void,
A weary, worthless void." He shuddered, turned
From e'en the shadow of that possible,
And drew his chair beside the fire that he
Might dwell with thankfulness upon the blest
Relief of knowing she was spared to him ;
And then in mental fond review he passed
Successively through all that Grace had been
To him ; her quiet, unobtrusive help,
Her pretty thoughtful, active, silent ways,
Her never-failing punctuality,
Her constant care, devotion, watchfulness
For all his likings, comforts, and pursuits :
No mother that he lost, no sister that
He might have had, no chosen woman whom
He might have made his wife, could better have
Divined his every wish, or studied to
Fulfil them pleasantly and welcomely.

A something in this "might have been" there was
That made the merchant start, as stung by what
Had crept about his heart while musing thus.
He rose abruptly, crushed the creeping thing,
And turned to write till long past midnight, when
All else but he had gone to rest.

Next day,

No sooner dinner done, than Bernard sent
Upstairs to know if he might come and pay
The invalid another visit, with
Much sportive ceremony and parade
Of deference to nurse's orders. She
Sent down to say that "Master may, as soon
As he thinks fit, and welcome, for we've made
A great improvement since last evening."
And Bernard found 'twas true; Grace looked much more
Her former self, in quiet strength beneath
A slender frame. The nurse permitted her
To chat herself, and let her answer when
The merchant spoke; so he availed himself
Of Wilson's gracious sanction, and addressed
His questions freely to the invalid.
He went about the room, examined its
Adornments, praised their grace, simplicity,

And taste ; then paused significantly, just
Before the cottage piano, looking straight
At Grace. " Ah, yes," she said, " that was my one
Extravagance ; but thought it well to make,
Lest I should lose the little music that
My mother taught me ; and I might have need,
Some day, I fancied, for accomplishments,
In case I had to teach." " To teach?" " Yes, teach ;
Give lessons ; go as governess myself,
If you became unable still to keep
Me here. Such things have been, I know ; and if
You had grown poorer, and could not have kept
Me here, I should have liked to earn myself
A living independently, and, — who
Can tell? — helped you, besides, if you would let
Me help." She spoke so gravely, with her own
Old quaint and simple self-possession, blent
With modest gentleness, that Bernard heard
Her gravely in return. " You paid a large
Amount for it, now, I suppose?" he asked.
" A large amount for me to spend," she said ;
" But not too much, considering what I
Should surely lose had I not had the means
Of practising." " Quite true," he answered, with

A smile he could not now repress ; “ you made
A prudent calculation, — how much gained
By a judicious outlay, set against
The price you pay, — the best economy.
And pray, now, may I ask what is it that
You practise? Playing, singing, what ? ” “ I play
Four hours a day ; and sing, at intervals,
A couple more. ” “ And might I farther ask,
If I’m not indiscreet, to hear you play
And sing ? ” said Bernard, laughingly. “ I’m not
Accustomed to do either, as you well
Can understand, to any ears but mine
And nurse’s ; but if you will promise to
Be audience lenient as ourselves, I’ll try
My best. ” She had her chair wheeled over to
The piano ; and played unaffectedly
Some favorite pieces of her own, then sang
A simple air or two she liked herself.
Her voice was sweet, pathetic, capable
Of giving full expression to a strain
That needed feeling chiefly ; and her songs
Were mostly these, — soft Indian tunes, and scraps
Of melody, — regretful, wild ; replete
With mournful, dirge-like, sad lament and wail ;

The merchant rendered duest homage by
His silence and his moistened eyes, as Grace
Concluded : she, a music-lover, well
Could understand this best of praise. He then
Resumed his walking round the room, and stopped
At each successive sketch and picture ; found
Them principally old remembered bits
Of Indian scenery, — rock, mountain, and ravine,
Small fisher hut, or ancient temple, with
A single lofty tree of cocoa-nut,
Thick jungle, tangled underwood, or else
A river-side with boat fantastic-shaped.
Amid them all there hung a portrait-sketch,
That Bernard knew at once, — his old friend Dick :
The face was capitally hit, — that look
Of bright expectant eagerness and hope,
So well remembered by the merchant, as
He gazed upon the likeness. “ Grace, did you
Draw this ? ” he said, at length. “ I did, ” was her
Low-toned reply ; “ I took it once when he
Was reading to my mother, full of glee
At news he had received : she thought it like.”
“ ’Tis very like, ” the merchant answered with
A deep-drawn breath, — “ poor Dick ! poor Dick ! ” Grace
had

Been nervously observing Bernard, as
He looked upon the crayon-sketch ; but when
She heard his sighing word there came a light
Into her face, — a sweet, glad light, — a light
That seemed a softened reflex of the bright
Expression in her father's : " Then you love
Him still ? I thought, — I feared " — she stopped. " I
loved

Him from a boy, he saved my life ; I love
His memory still, in thinking of his bright
And kindly nature. Could you fear I ceased
To love your father ? Dear old eager Dick ! "
" I fancied — dreaded — the remittance that
He failed to send might cause you to " — " He sent
A treasure, priceless household treasure, that
Outvalues all the sums of India ! " said
The merchant in an earnest under-breath ;
And, for a moment, not a word beyond
Was uttered by himself or Grace. He then
Began to talk of other things, and fell
To asking her about the simple white
Soft draperies that curtained shadingly
The windows in harmonious contrast with
The grass-like green of carpet, and of walls

That papered were with trellis, bowered in
By woodbine, jasmine, climbing rose ; while round
The base there ran a garland-bordering
Of clustered ferns and wild anemones,
Recalling rustic gardens, woodland glades,
And pleasant, country, open-air retreats.

“How did you manage, Grace, to ornament
Your room with all these elegancies, for
So small a sum as Wilson vouches that
You spent? You must not henceforth limit your
Ingenious thrift to furnishing your own
Apartments only ; through the house your care
And taste must now extend ; and let me, too,
Enjoy the pleasure and the benefit.”

“Most gladly,” she returned. “I never dared
Attempt a change downstairs ; I fancied you
Preferred to have all left exactly as
It ever had been. Now beware the wave
Of Grace’s fairy-wand ; its potency
Shall be most fully tried, thus summoned by
Your invocation ; you have called it forth
To exercise its spell ; take care it does
Not ruin you in articles undreamed
Of by the former furnishers employed, —

Conventional upholsterers, with all
Their heavy durable moreens and stuffs.”
“I’m reckless, Grace! Perform your fairy will!
Be boundless in your magical behests!
And play the powerful enchantress in
Your vast commands! I can afford to meet
Prosaic bills, and write out cheques, with aught
Else may assist to summon up the aid
Of ministering spirits you may need
To bring you silks from Samarcand, or rich
Brocades and damasks from the looms of far
Cathay or Persia, — where you will.” “You talk
Of bills and cheques, and such ‘prosaic’ charms
Of incantation; but methinks your thoughts
Have wandered to the realms of poesy:
I fancy I have somewhere seen the words
Of ‘silken Samarcand’ and ‘far Cathay.’”
“I know but little of the poets, Grace,”
Said Bernard, “saving one, who wrote a play
Beginning with a spirited account
Of what a merchant’s haunting fears must be
Lest ‘rocks’ should split his ‘gentle vessel’s side,’
Should ‘scatter all her spices on the stream,
Enrobe the roaring waters with her silks.’”

But let's return to prose, — and understand
That I am now no longer poor, but rich :
You look surprised, Grace ; well you may ; for I
Have gone on quietly at work to gain
The ground I lost, through these few years, and made
No outward change, although at present I
Possess abundant wealth ; so, in plain prose,
Be sure you use it freely, Grace, and turn
The house to Palace of Aladdin in
A trice." "Free use of cash, with liberty
To use my taste, I have Aladdin's lamp,"
She answered, "therefore you may soon expect
To see the magic change you authorize."

But modern genii, although they're swayed
To speed by money, still take time to bring
About their transformations ; workmen once
Within a house, the marvels of their slow
Advance vie with the marvels they effect :
So, while her gnomes wrought out her mandates with
Precision equal to her own in all
She ordered, Grace was taken down to the
Seaside by careful Mistress Wilson, that
She might recover perfectly before
The mansion was arranged according to

Her wish. The time of Grace's absence was
A weary one to Bernard ; but he plunged
Into his merchant-work, and slipped away
At intervals from town, with pretext that
He must tell Grace how gnomes and genii
Got on while she played truant by the sea.

At length the whole was finished, and return
Was gladly made to the old London home ;
Old home, but newly, tastefully adorned :
The "roomy," now no longer "gloomy" house,
Had brightness, cheerfulness, and elegance,
The dining-room where Bernard so enjoyed
His genial hour of rest, good fare, and chat,
Was made chief scene of Grace's care and taste.
The lumbering old sideboard, horsehair chairs
Ranged side by side along in formal row,
The window curtains, with their rigid folds
Of stiff, unyielding, thick moreen, in hue
A dingy brown half faded into drab,
The clumsy girandoles, the ugly grate,
The high old-fashioned chimney-piece, beyond
One's reach, its marble yellowed through by stain
Of smoke and age, the walls left pictureless
And blank, with ponderous flock-papering

That dull absorbed the light into its own
Grim red, — were all replaced by paintings choice,
By sculpture exquisite, by colors of
A delicate harmonious tint ; while the old
Monotony of “ willow-pattern ” plates
And dishes now gave way to porcelain
Of dainty-flowered device, set off by glass
And silver, sparkling in a million rays
Of shifting jewelled light, — now amethyst,
Now topaz, sapphire, ruby, emerald.
As crowning loveliness to all the rest,
Grace decked the table daily with rich groups
Of ruddy fruits, placed on the frosted glass
And frosted silver of a branched epergne :
While freshest flowers she placed with artist eye
And fingers ; some in feathery sprays down drooped
From crystal brim of a tall vase, some massed
In flatter tazzas of Etruscan ware
And form. Contrasted color, shape, and scent
Delicious, all were there to yield delight.
Now Bernard's home was what a home should be,
A shrine of beauty, comfort, and repose.

Thus time moved on apace, and two years more
Had nearly passed, when in the city was

Announced a ball for some large charity
That interested all the world, and roused
The mingled sympathies of love for deeds
Benevolent, and dancing. Bernard was
Entreated by the Lady-Patroness
To give his aid and to promote the thing.
He sent a handsome contribution and
Took tickets home to Grace, with smiling look,
Demanding if she cared to go. "Of course
You will. The question hardly need be asked.
What girl would think of saying 'No' to ball
Proposed? What sensible young lady would
Refuse a dance?" "Not I," said Grace, "the thought
Of my first ball already flutters at
My heart ; in part because it is my first,
In part because I fear I may not know
Enough of dancing to acquit myself
With credit. But I mean to try, and if
I fail, I can amuse my eyes, if not
My feet, by looking on at others." "Ah,
That shows how little of a dancer you
Have ever been. I've heard that to a good
Enthusiastic dancer few things are
More hard than playing the looker-on. Be that,

However, as it may, I've asked the wife
Of an old business friend of mine to act
The chaperone, and take you, Grace." "But you
Will go yourself, will you not?" she asked
With quick look up; "you do not mean to stay
In peace at home, and shabbily leave me
To go with this strange lady, do you?" "No,"
Said he; "for once I'll play the youngster, and
Again enjoy a ball. For this one will
To me be an enjoyment, since I mean
To see how Grace 'acquits' herself." "Don't go
With sly intent to entertain yourself
At my expense, and laugh at my defects
Of inexperience; for if you do
I'll make you dance one dance with me, and show
How your unpractised steps exceed my own
In awkwardness." "I ask no better than
You should accept me for a partner, Grace;
I fear the stoop my shoulders have acquired
By years of bending o'er my merchant work
At office-desk would make you hesitate,
Ere figuring with one would cut so bad
A figure in a ball-room. You would blush
To have a partner like myself." He spoke

In playful tone, but glanced with earnestness
At Grace's face, which at the moment wore
Just such a blush as he alluded to,
While answering with smile should match his tone :—
“ You want a compliment ; you know how good
The figure is you thus — conceited that
You are ! — draw notice to, affecting to
Dispraise. But fear not I shall e'er invite
You ; lest I might become the envy of
All ladies in the room.” He could not quite
Determine how much irony might lurk
In Grace's laughing speech ; but hid whate'er
Of trouble and disturbing doubt he felt
Beneath responsive rallying.

The night

Arrived, and Lady Bullion came, arrayed
In matron lappets, diamonds, and gown
Of velvet, to conduct the novice, Grace :
Who, robed in simple white, looked lovelier,
The merchant thought, than any maiden he
Had ever seen. He asked himself if this
Could be the “ unformed awkward girl ” he called
Her to himself when she had first arrived ;
This graceful, modest, perfect creature, fair

And beautiful in nature as in form.
And others found her fair no less than he :
Fat Lady Bullion vowed she was quite proud
To have the charge of one who'd prove to be
Without a doubt the beauty of the ball ;
And the event confirmed her ladyship's
Prediction. Partners pressed in numbers to
Be introduced and granted leave to ask
If she would hold herself engaged for next
One after fourth ensuing dance ; and thus
Did Bernard find he should have little chance
Of *the* dance she had said she meant to make
Him dance with her. But just as he began
To give up hope, Grace beckoned him beside
Her chair, and said with archness in her tone,
But with a rosy flush upon her cheek : —
“ You've seen how Grace 'acquits herself ;' should you
Refuse to try how 'bad a figure' you
Would make with her as partner, if she told
You she has kept one dance — the promised dance —
For you ? ” For answer, Bernard took her hand,
His eyes expressing speechless joy, and led
Her to her place, with more of triumph in
His heart than had been there to gladden it

Since he had been a happy boy, elate,
With life before him, full of conscious power
To reach his highest aim of glorious
Achievement. But when once the dance was done,
And Grace was claimed by younger partners, more
Accomplished dancers, a reaction came : —

“Fool, self-deluder that I am! Why do
I let my thoughts take that most fruitless bent?
Why will they wander in that hopeless track
I have so often told myself is closed
Against me, past all chance of leading to
The paradise of happiness that might
Have been, were I a younger man? She likes
Me as her father’s friend, no more. Be mute,
Be patient, Bernard! Be not your own
Misleader, and destroyer of what joy
Is still within your reach. Her innocent
Devotion and affection are now yours ;
Why risk their loss by rash betrayal of
Your deeper feeling for herself? Be mute,
Be prudent ; rest contented with the share
You have in her most gentle, loving heart,
And lose it not by seeking love itself.”

But on the following day his self-communed

Resolves were put severely to the proof.
A certain May-fair Baronet had seen
The City Belle and danced with her. He asked
Her name, her parentage, and found she was
The ward of Bernard Thorpe, with whom Sir John
Had had some money dealings recently.
He called at once upon the merchant at
His office ; and in easy way began
To speak his mind : “ Look here, you see, I’ll tell
You frankly what has brought me here to-day ;
At your great City Ball last night I saw —
Was introduced to your Miss Middleton —
I danced with her ; I hear she is your ward ? ”
“ She is my ward,” was Bernard’s answer, with
A cold incline of head. “ Well, then, she is,
Without exception, the most beautiful —
The finest girl I’ve seen for many a day.
I was so struck with her, that — ’pon my soul —
I came to you at once to-day to ask —
A beauty such as hers excuses what
May seem abrupt, unusual, my dear sir ;
But she herself is so unusual in
Her handsomeness that really, now, a man
Can’t help himself, you know. Of course, you staid,

Calm, middle-agers hardly understand
This sort of thing : you money-worshippers
Can scarcely be expected to allow
For hare-brained fellows like myself, who can't,
By Jove, be prudent where a lovely girl's
Concerned ; but still, dear sir, you'll pardon me
For coming straight to ask you " — " What, Sir John ? "
Was Bernard's curt inquiry. " Well, to ask
If you'll permit me — beauty, my dear sir,
Is irresistible, and so " — " And so,
Sir John ? " " And so, my dearest sir, you see,
I come at once to ask your leave to court
Miss Middleton — to offer her — to pay
Her my addresses." " You're aware, Sir John,
Her father left her portionless ? " " I've heard
Some story of a loan not paid — of a
Remittance never sent — I'm not quite sure
About the facts ; but think that I have heard
Her father was a careless scamp, who " — " Stay,"
The merchant cried, " her father was my friend,
My dearest, oldest friend, Sir John ; I will
Not hear him spoken ill of." " Well, at least
I've heard he was a thoughtless chap, who left
His daughter without fortune ; you, dear sir,

Just said as much, that she was portionless,
Worth nothing, did you not?" "Worth nothing! — I?
Grace Middleton worth nothing?" "*Has* nothing,
Dear sir, was what I should have said, of course;
I meant Miss Middleton is dowerless;
You understand?" "Oh, yes, I understand,"
Said Bernard quietly. "But you may give
Her something, though, yourself, you know, dear sir;
She's almost like a daughter to you; or
Perhaps do something for her at your death."
"My death?" "Of course it's to be hoped that may
Be long deferred, dear sir; but when it comes,
You know, you might leave something handsome in
Your will." "My will?" "Ay, in your will: of course
A man like you, a wealthy man, a man
So prudent as you are, has made his will.
It needn't make one's death more near, you know.
You must be getting on, though, now I come
To think of it; yet not by any means
Advanced in years: to fellows like myself
Of twenty-three, a man like you seems old.
If fair the question, now, what is your age?
It can't be fifty yet." "Just thirty-six."
"Indeed! I should have given you more, I own.

But, then, hard work, you know, and laying up
The lucre, makes us all look older, eh?
You'll think of my proposal, my dear sir,
And give it the advantage of your own
Good word, when you submit it to the fair
Miss Middleton?" "I promise you I will lay
Before her your proposal for her due
Consideration," answered Bernard Thorpe;
"And now I'll wish you a good morning, if
You please, Sir John; my time is not my own;
I have appointment with the directors of
North Western at eleven o'clock. I know
You will excuse me." "Certainly, dear sir;
You wealthy City men are never at
Your own disposal. We West-enders have
Advantage of you there; but as for more
Substantial cash advantage, why — ha, ha!
It must be owned you have decidedly
Advantage over us." Sir John took leave;
And that same evening, when Bernard sat
With Grace beside the fire, he said: "You danced
Last night with young Sir John Bodapperton."
"I did?" said Grace; "I daresay that I did,
And knew but little of the honor I

Enjoyed, there were so many candidates
For my poor hand to dance, I hardly could
Distinguish them apart, still less by name.
I think, though, now, I do remember that
One name among the several that were
Pronounced by Lady Bullion, when they came
To bow and beg to be presented. He
Is fair and lanky, is he not? with just
A morsel of light sandy whisker, that
He pulled and pulled, while he was dancing, with
The bright intention — as it seemed to me —
Of making it grow longer ere he'd done.”
“You thought it ‘honor’ to be asked to dance
By him: what will you think when I inform
You that he offers you the honor of
Becoming, if you please, the partner of
His life?” “Of his?” she answered in a tone
So unmistakably contemptuous,
That Bernard laughed outright, and she in turn,
To witness his amusement. “Poor Sir John;
I see that I shall have to break his heart
By telling him of your refusal, your
Point-blank refusal.” “Well, please say that I
Decline the honor he proposes; that

Will be the proper style, I fancy." "Ay,
Exactly," Bernard said. "Among the rest
Of those who danced with me last night, at least
A dozen were worth fifty of Sir John ;
And one there was, an old acquaintance, that
I was quite glad to see again, — your clerk,
Young Mr. Frankland, who so frequently
At one time used to come with messages
To you. I've often meant to ask you why
He never comes of late ; I hope he still
Is with you as a clerk ?" "Yes," Bernard said,
"He still is in our house of business."
"Then how is it he never comes now to
Your dwelling-house ? I feel quite sure he has
Done nothing that should forfeit your esteem.
I know he prized it highly, and from what
I know of him, I'm confident he can
Have done no ill." "You speak with warmth, Grace, you
Avouch your confidence in one of whom
You've seen but little ; what can you have known
Of Henry Frankland that should warrant such
Full confidence in his desert ?" "I speak
With warmth because I warmly feel," she said.
"I feel quite certain Mr. Frankland has

Committed nothing base, unworthy ; no
Dishonorable action that should cause
You to forbid his coming here ; now tell
Me, has he ? ” “ None, ” said Bernard dryly. “ I
Was sure of it ; I told you so ; I knew
He could have done no ill. From what I’ve seen
Of him, I feel that he’s incapable
Of meanness or disgraceful conduct ; and,
In justice, nothing less should make you change
The former friendliness you showed him,
And damage his good name by letting him
No longer enter your own private house.
Consider, how his feelings will be hurt,
And how his prospects injured by so marked
An alteration. Knowing well the high
And honoring regard he has for you,
The gratitude he feels for all you’ve done
For him and his, I can imagine his
Unhappiness, to find himself no more
Entrusted with your messages, nor sent,
As previously, to your own home. Forgive
My warmly speaking — if too warm it be —
But I feel earnestly in this ; and I
Must always speak to you exactly as

I feel." "Nay, God forbid you ever should
Do otherwise," said Bernard warmly as
Herself; "but how, Grace, comes it that you know
So much of Henry Frankland's character,
Of what I have done for him and his,
Of his regard, his gratitude, to me?"
"I saw a great deal of him when he used
To come and wait while you wrote out replies
To papers that he brought," said Grace; "you know
I told you how I asked him to explain
Whatever I could not make out from books
On calculation and accounts: well, when
All that was done, he sometimes talked of you,
And sometimes of himself; and all he said
Convinced me of his grateful nature, of
His honorable character; so I
Was sure he could have done no act that ought
To forfeit him your trust." "He used his time
With good effect, and made the most of it,"
Said Bernard bitterly; "it seems he talked
So eloquently of himself, that you
Imbued impression of his worth enough
To render you his advocate, and make
You plead his cause with warmth and fervor that

Might fill with envy any other man
Less favored. What would poor Sir John have said
Could he have made a like impression?" "He!"
Said Grace, with scornful emphasis again.
"Sir John's not worthy to be named with such
A man as Henry Frankland; though the one
May be a baronet, the other but
A merchant's clerk." "The merchant's clerk
Is to be envied, Grace, if he have gained
The favor that the baronet has sought
In vain." "The 'favor'?" echoed Grace, at length
Observing Bernard's strangely bitter tone
Of sadness. "Yes, your favor, favoring
Opinion, preference." "I have a high,
A very high opinion of the one,
While of Sir John, I fear, 'tis very low;
But if by 'preference' you mean the sort
Of liking asked by the lank baronet,
For neither of them have I that," said Grace,
With laughing frankness. "All the better for
Myself it should be so," continued she;
"Since Henry Frankland told me once his hope
To marry Lucy Mildmay, his betrothed,
When better salary shall justify

The match." "To marry!" Bernard cried, in tone
Now clear as clouded 'twas before; "I've heard
No word of this: how comes it that you know
A secret so important, while to me
'Twas never breathed?" "He thought me likely, I
Suppose, to sympathize with what he said;
Of you he has too great an awe; and feared,
Perhaps, you might not quite approve; or, still
More likely, dreaded mentioning his wish,
Lest it might seem like begging you to raise
A salary that you yourself had been
The means of his obtaining." "'Awe'? of me?
He thinks most probably that I'm too old
To have much sympathy with lovers, and
Their hopes of marriage." "You! too old?" said Grace,
With genuine surprise. "Too old to think
Of love, to care for love; and if he should,
What wonder? An old bachelor like me
Is sure to be regarded as stone deaf
To lovers' hopes, and dead to love itself."
A sudden pang of vital agony,
That gave sharp negative to Bernard's words,
Shot through him as he spoke, and made him start
From forth his chair to pace the room in wild

Disorder irrepressible. Then by
An effort, mastering himself, he came
To Grace's side, and strove to steady down
His voice to more of calmness, as he said :—
“I can no longer bear this torture of
Perpetual struggle to suppress the truth.
Grace, what would *you* think were you told by me
A love-story? Would *you* think me too old
To care for love? Would *you* believe me deaf
And dead to love?” “Too old?” again said Grace ;
But now with agitation in her tone,
Besides surprise ; “confide to me your love,
You'll have my sympathy, believe me ; your
Commencement tells me that your story is
Of hopeless love ; how strange it should be so !
How stranger still I never guessed you loved ;
Yet saw you all that is most loving and
Most lovable. But tell me who she is :
I know so little of your outer life, you know ;
I only know you in your home.” Grace spoke
With firmness, spite of agitation and
A secret pain she ne'er had felt before ;
But very low and gentle was her voice.
“It is my inner life I tell you of,”

Said Bernard. "True," Grace answered ; "what I meant
Was life outside this house, — your friendships, your
Attachments, which are all beyond the sphere
Wherein I've seen you, known you, learned to make
You centre of my interest and thought."

A little tremble came in Grace's voice .

As she said this, but she went on : "You need
Not fear indifference because I do
Not know the lady ; I shall feel for you."

"You have not heard my story, Grace," he said.

"No ; tell it me." "You do not know how mad,
How rash I've been ; how I have let my thoughts
Entwine themselves around perfection in

A gentle woman's shape : a creature so
Endowed with every quality of good,
Of tender, and of true ; of sensible,
Of gifted, and of prudent ; of modest,
Of diffident, devoted, kind ; withal

So beautiful, and — more than all — so young,
That my own difference of years makes such

Enamoured sense of her fair excellence
No less than madness, consignment of
Myself to hopeless, endless misery, —
Unless, indeed, this young, this beautiful

Perfection could perceive the youth of heart,
The freshness of affection that survive
To render years of small account, and serve
As sacred light to cast into eclipse
Defects that else would be but only too
Apparent. Grace, 'tis you, 'tis you alone
That can decide this doubt which long has made
My secret torment of suspense, and now
Impels me to speak out, that I may learn
At once the worst — or best." As Bernard spoke,
There spread a gradual beam of happy, glad
Delight o'er Grace's face, a radiance of
Content, that made her look as beautiful
As even his adoring words proclaimed.
He was not slow to read the speaking look ;
And murmured : " Grace, you do not bid me fear
The ' worst ' ? " " I bid you know the ' best, ' — if ' best '
You call the certainty that you have long
Been loved by Grace ; unconsciously, but yet
Most deeply, truly : without knowing it
Herself, she must have loved you from the first,
I think," she said, with sweet ingenuous eyes
Soft raised to his. " When first she came to you,
A helpless, timid girl, afraid to find

Herself a burden and a worthless charge,
A graceless, profitless young thing, you let
Her try her best to expiate the wrong
Her father did you ; suffered her to help
You and endeavor what she could to make
Your home a home to you ; well might she learn
To love you with a love that was at once
Revering, grateful, worshipping, and fond ;
Spontaneously it sprang, and unawares
It grew to be the love you wish ; ay, love
Itself." He folded her within his arms,
And drew her to his heart of hearts. " My Grace,
My own, my wife ! From first to last you've been
A wife to me, a priceless home delight
And treasure ; wifely in your childish care
And ministry, most wifely in your youth
Of sympathy and aid in my pursuits ;
Now wifeliest in your acknowledged love.
A thousandfold you have redeemed the pledge
My old friend gave, and made me nobly rich :
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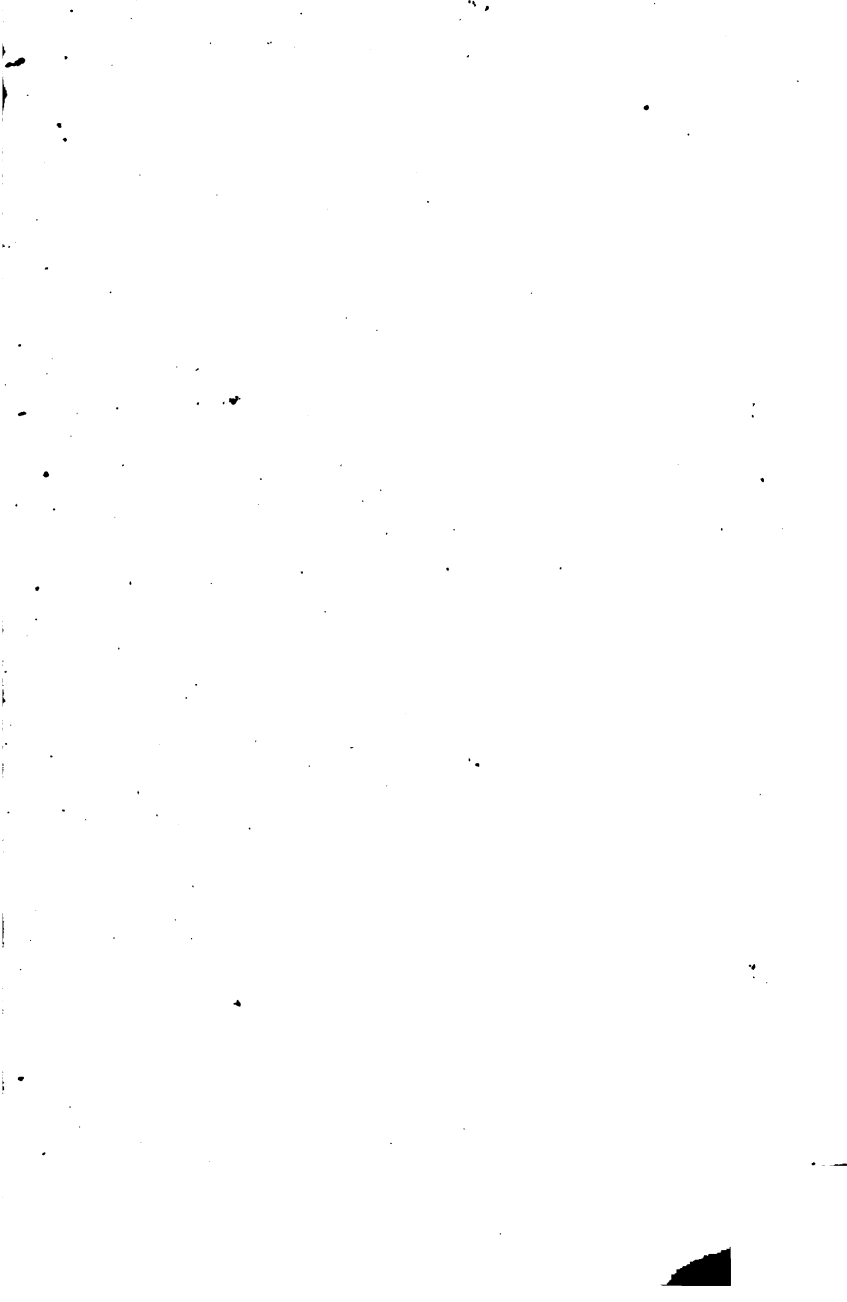
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